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THE IMPROVED PARAMOUNT METHOD

FOR

BANJO FINGER STYLE

C NOTATION

By F. J. Bacon

A complete and easily understood Method for Students and Teachers, containing all the essential features of the modern style of playing.

Price in U.S.A.
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The BANJO

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F. J. BACON

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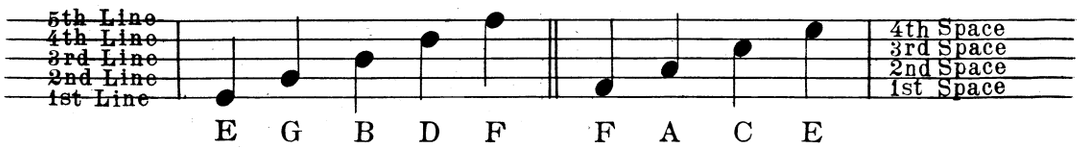
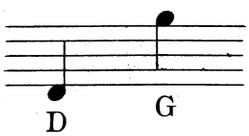
Rudiments of Music

Musical notation is composed of various signs and characters. The first to be noticed is the staff, consisting of five parallel lines and the spaces between them. On the lines and in the spaces, characters called notes are written to represent the sounds.

The Staff and Notes

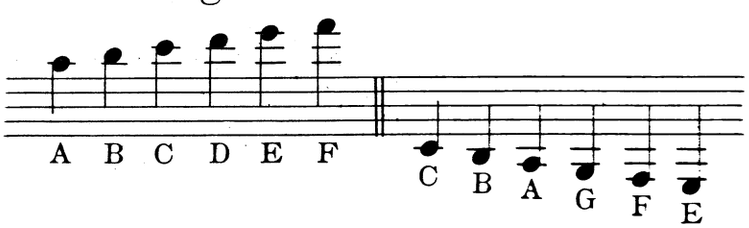


Immediately below and above the staff are the following two notes, D and G.



Higher and lower pitches, or sounds, than the above, are represented by short lines called leger or added lines, written above or below the staff.

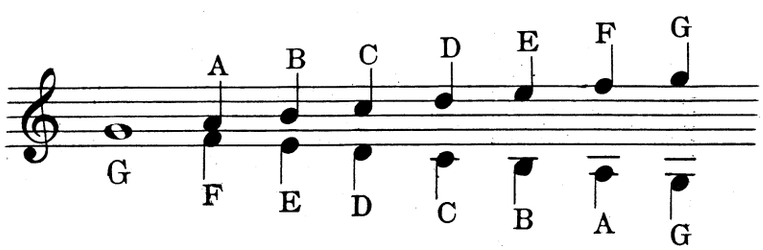
Leger Lines and Notes



The notes are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet and are employed over and over again; and when written in regular succession, with the first note repeated— after the seventh, a scale of eight notes will be formed; thus: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A. Any one of the first seven letters may be the first or beginning of a scale; as: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C.

Treble Clef

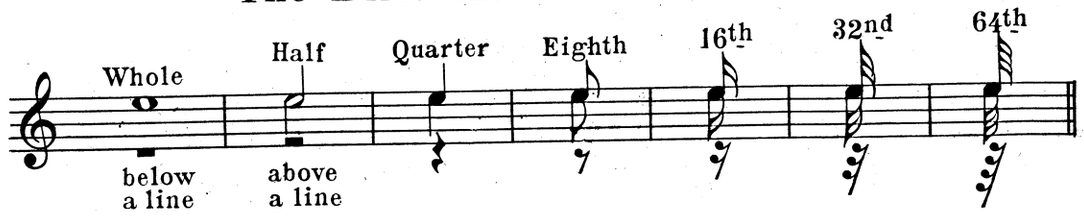
The Treble Clef, made thus 𝄞, is always placed at the beginning of compositions for this instrument. It establishes the note G, on the second line of the staff and from it, all other notes are determined; either ascending or descending, as in the following example.



The Time Value of the Notes and Rests

The value or duration of the notes and rests are represented by the following characters.

The Different Notes and Rests



Dotted Notes and Rests

The time value of any note or rest is increased one half when followed by a dot. A second dot adds half the value of the first dot. Rests indicate silence.

Dotted Notes and Rests

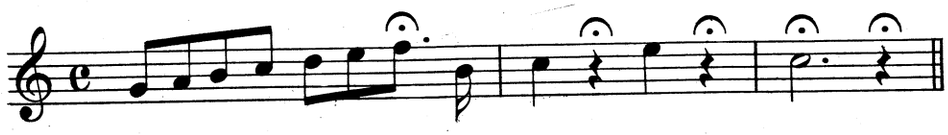
and their equivalents

The Tie ⁀, placed over or under two or more notes on the same degree, signifies that only the first is sounded and the others heard from its continued vibration: as in the above examples.

The Pause or Hold

Made thus 𝄐, when placed over notes or rests, denote that they are to be held beyond their regular time.

Examples of the Pause



Bars– Measure

Bars are perpendicular lines drawn across the staff for the purpose of dividing the notes into measures of equal duration of time. Double Bars denote the end of a part or strain. Dots placed before a double bar indicate that the part is to be repeated.

Example

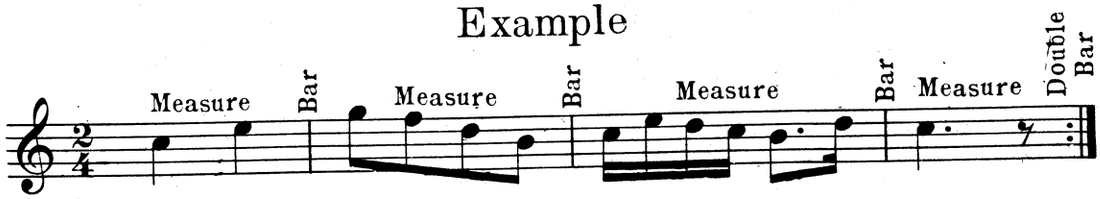
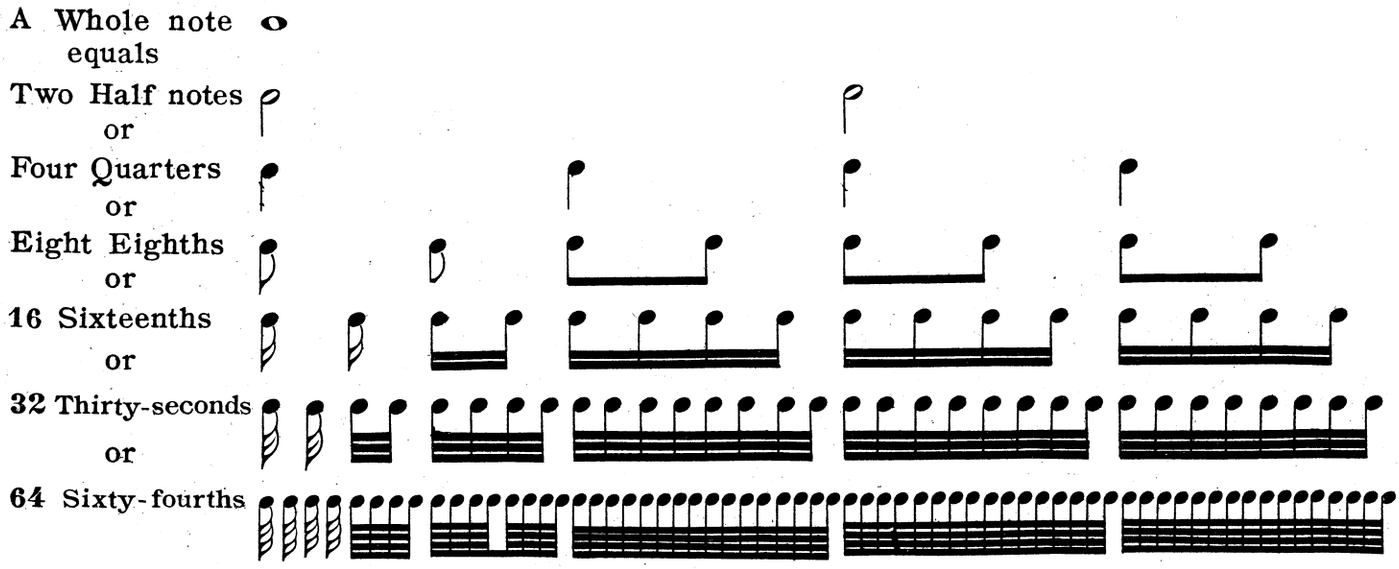


Table of the Relative Time Value of Notes



Chromatic Signs

These are the Sharp (♯), Flat(♭), Natural (♮), Double Sharp (𝄪), and Double Flat (𝄫). A Sharp *raises* the pitch of a note a half step. A Flat *lowers* the pitch of a note a half step. A Natural cancels the effect of a previous sharp or flat.

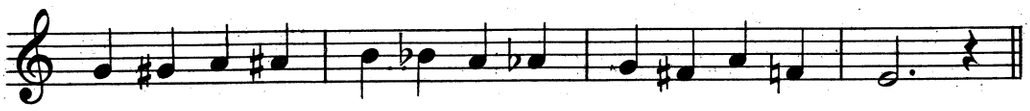
A half step is from one fret to the next.

Sharps or Flats placed at the beginning of the staff, immediately after the clef is called the signature and affects the pitch of all notes of the same name throughout a piece of music, unless temporarily changed by a different sign.

Accidentals

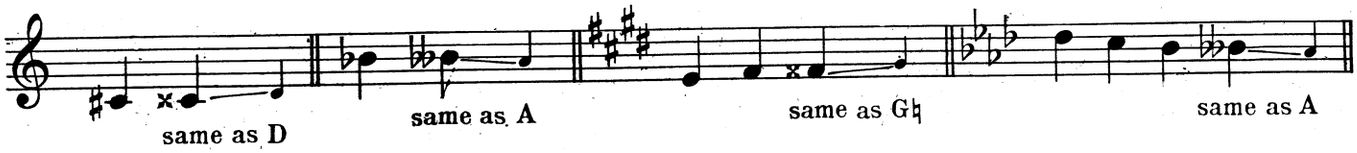
When any of the chromatic signs are placed before notes in the course of a piece of music, they are called accidentals, and affect all notes of the same name, in the same measure, unless contradicted by a different accidental, in which case, the effect of the first accidental ceases. The effect of accidentals do not extend beyond the measure in which they occur.

Examples of Accidentals



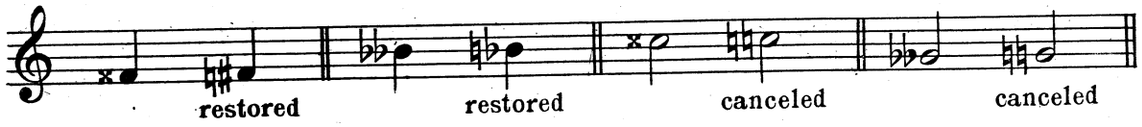
Double sharps and flats are used as accidentals only. A double sharp (𝄪), raises the pitch of a note a whole step. A double flat (𝄫) lowers the pitch of a note a whole step. When a double sharp is placed before a note that is already sharp, it raises its pitch another half step. A double flat placed before a note that is already flat, lowers its pitch another half step.

Examples of Double Sharps and Flats



A note that is **double sharp** or flat is restored to a single sharp or flat by writing a natural and a **sharp,** or a flat, as required, before the note. To entirely cancel a double **sharp or flat,** a double natural (𝄮) is placed before the note.

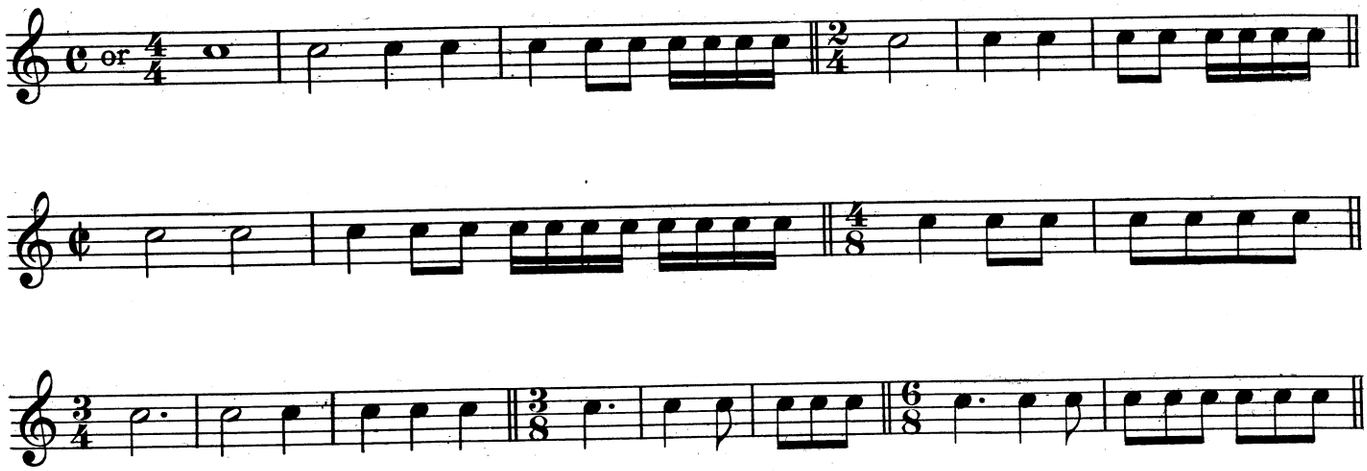
Examples



Time

Time is the division of the different notes, or notes and rests, into measures of equal duration. A measure can contain any denomination of notes and rests, but the sum total in value must be the same in all, as long as the time remains unchanged. The time is marked at the beginning of a piece of music, by figures or signs to indicate the quantity in each measure; as in the following examples.

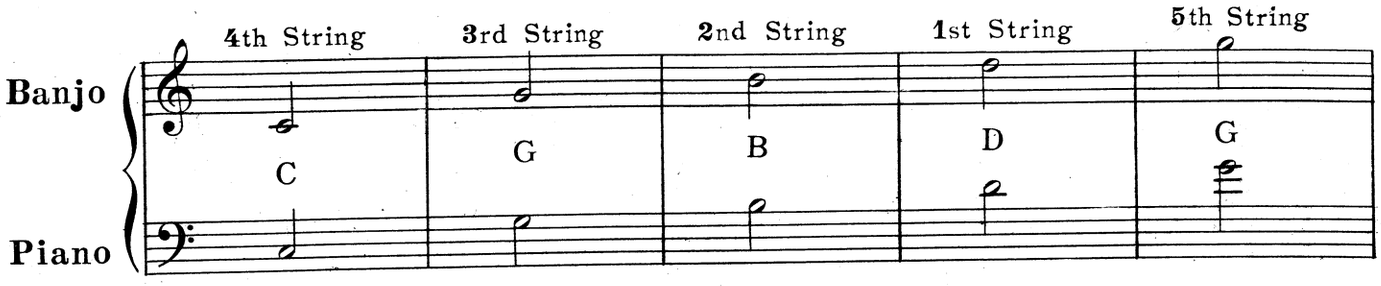
Examples



Chords and How to Play Them

The Banjo is generally strung with five strings. They take their names from the notes to which they are tuned, though they also may be called by numbers, which beginning with the string farthest from you are, D or 1st, B or 2nd, G or 3rd, C or 4th, G *(Thumb)* or 5th.

All notes of the Banjo are written in the treble clef: 𝄞 and sound one octave lower than written. The top stave of the following, shows the open strings, and the lower stave, their corresponding notes on the Piano *(written in Bass clef)*.



Tuning

The ordinary method, is to tune the 4th string to C on the Piano, "the first note of the above" then tune the others as follows:-

Press the 4th string at the 7th fret and tune the open 3rd string in unison
Press the 3rd string at the 4th fret and tune the open 2nd string in unison
Press the 2nd string at the 3rd fret and tune the open 1st string in unison
Press the 1st string at the 5th fret and tune the open 5th string in unison
Prove the tuning by striking the corresponding notes on the Piano.

Right Hand Fingering

A cross (+) over or under the notes indicates that the thumb strikes
One dot (•) over or under the notes indicates that the first finger strikes
Two dots (••) over or under the notes indicates that the second finger strikes
Three dots (•••) over or under the notes indicates that the third finger strikes

Left Hand Fingering

The figure 1 indicates that the first finger presses the string
The figure 2 indicates that the second finger presses the string
The figure 3 indicates that the third finger presses the string
The figure 4 indicates that the fourth finger presses the string
The figure 0 indicates that the string is played open, not pressed.

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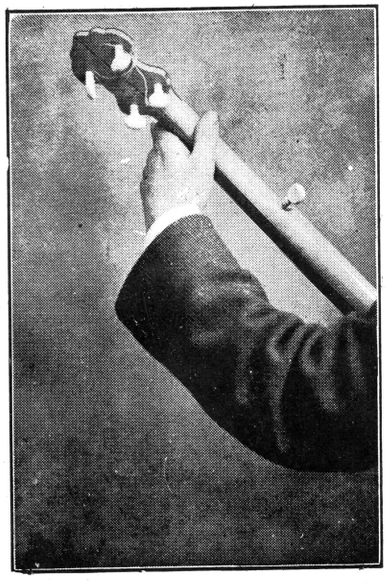
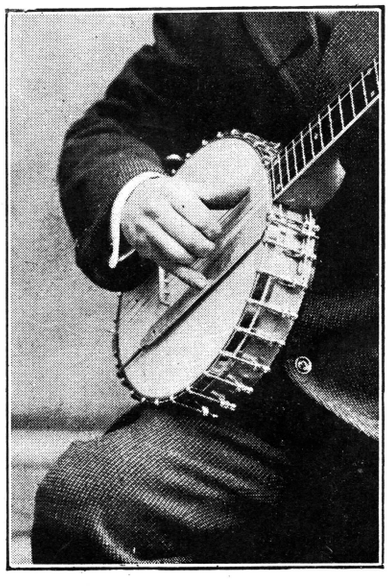




Position of the Body and hands when playing the banjo.

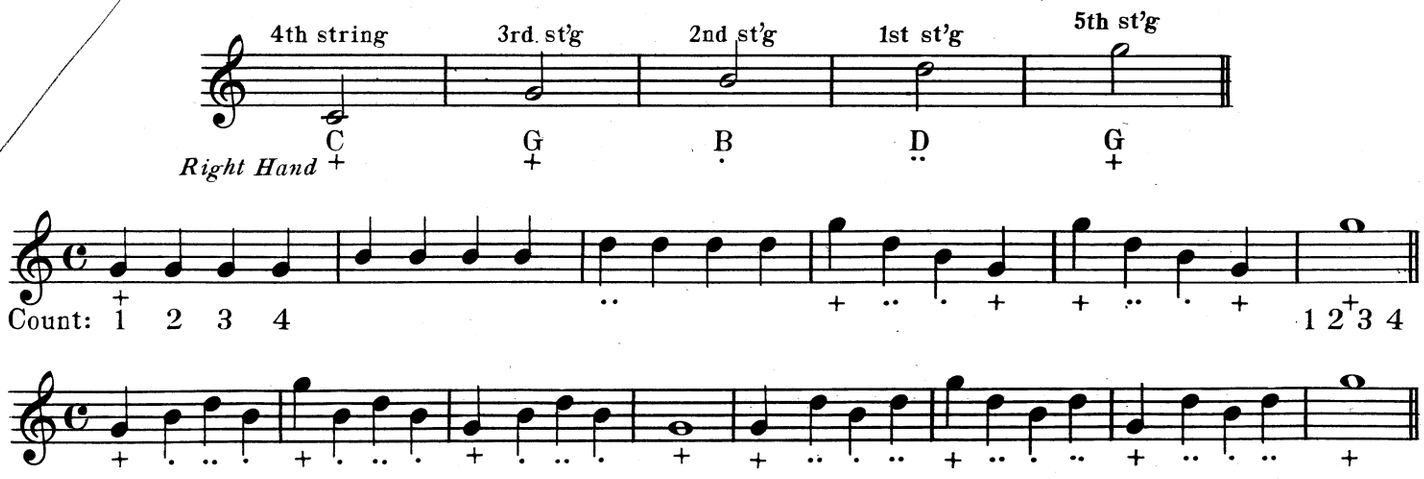
The Body should be nearly erect, but leaning slightly forward. Rest the Rim of the banjo on the right thigh, pressing the upper part lightly to the body with the forearm. Support the neck in the hollow of the left hand, between the finger and thumb as shown in illustration No. 2. then curve the fingers so that the tips can be used in pressing the strings to the fingerboard.

Rest the little finger of the right hand about an inch and a half or two inches from the bridge and curve the other fingers so that the thumb will strike the strings about an inch farther from the bridge than the first finger. See Illustration Nº 3.

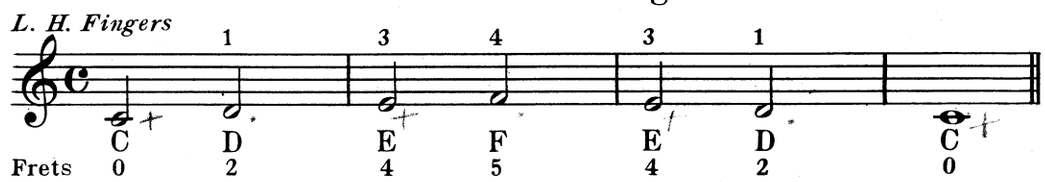
Never allow the thumb to pick the strings *back of the first and second fingers. Never* bend the thumb at first joint when striking the strings. It should be kept straight at all times.

The strings should be picked with the *tips* of the fingers, and never get under the strings far enough to lift them up, giving a disagreeable snapping tone. *Never* pick the strings with the nails.

Open Strings

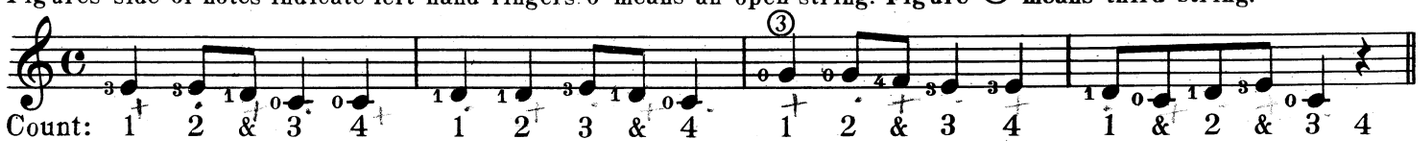


C or 4th String



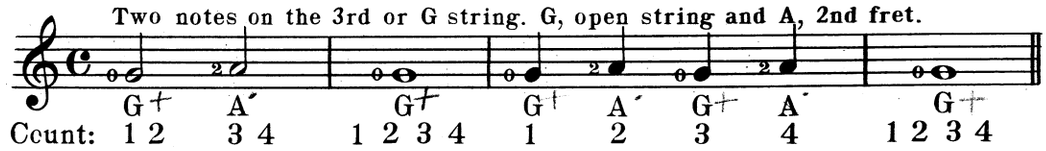
MELODY EXERCISE

Figures side of notes indicate left hand fingers. o means an open string. Figure ③ means third string.



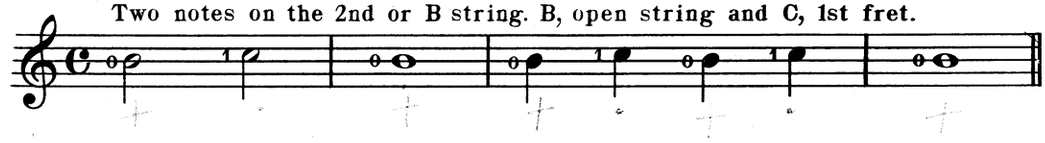
G or 3rd String

Two notes on the 3rd or G string. G, open string and A, 2nd fret.

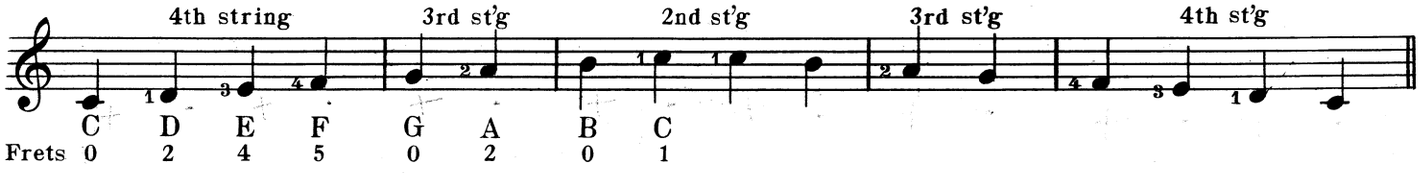


B or 2nd String

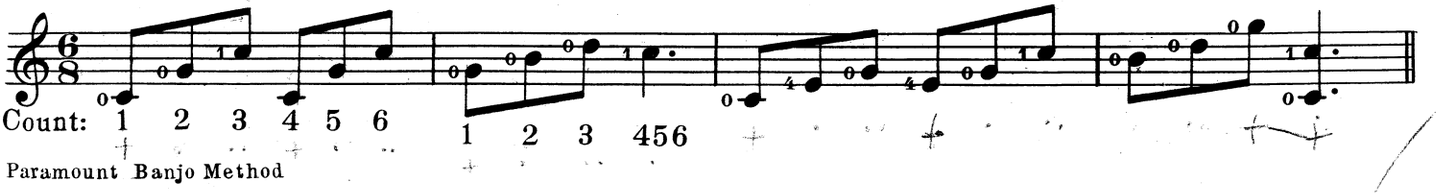
Two notes on the 2nd or B string. B, open string and C, 1st fret.



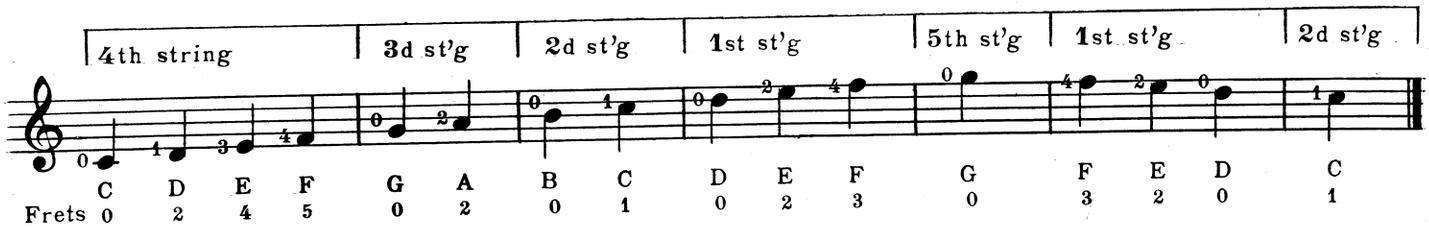
SCALE OF C (1st Octave)



EXERCISE No. 2

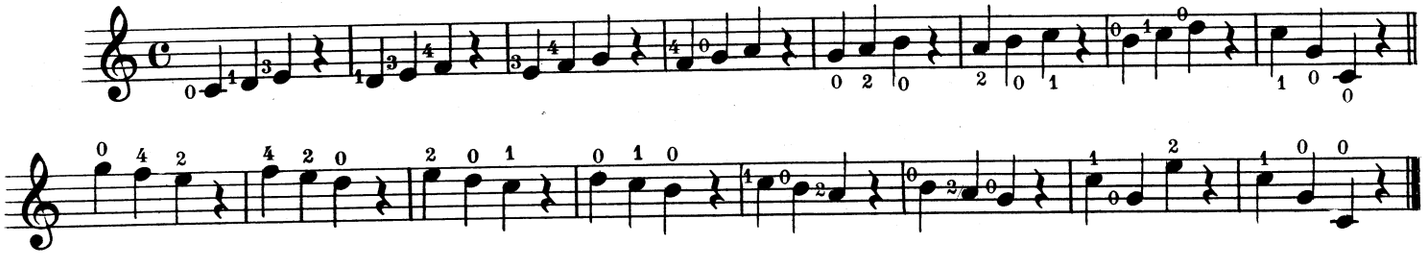


EXTENDED SCALE OF C



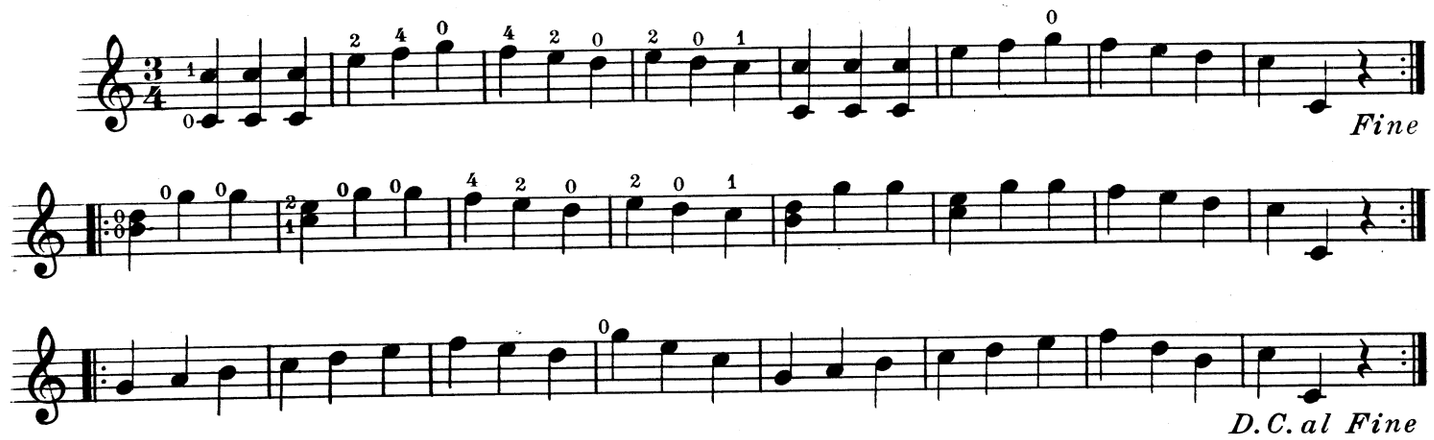
COUNTING THE TIME

The following exercise is in Common time, each measure requiring four beats or counts. Give one count to each quarter note. The quarter rest at the end of every measure also requires one count.

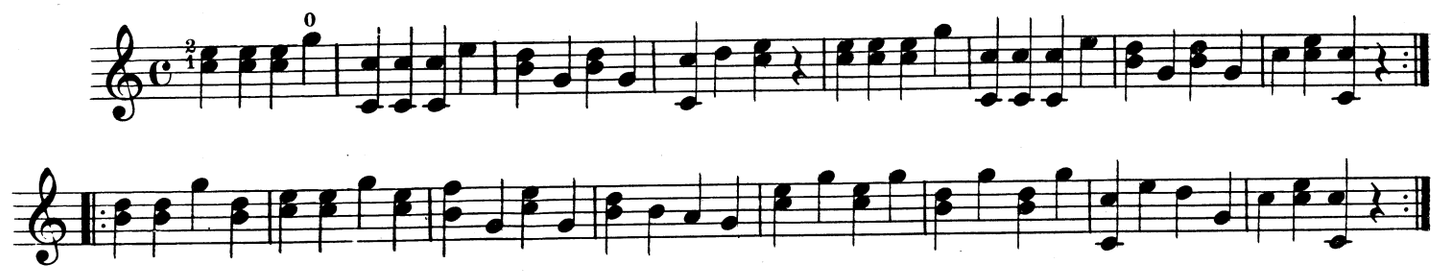


Waltz Time

Count three beats to a measure, playing a quarter note at every beat. When two or more notes are on one stem, it constitutes a chord, meaning the notes are played together.

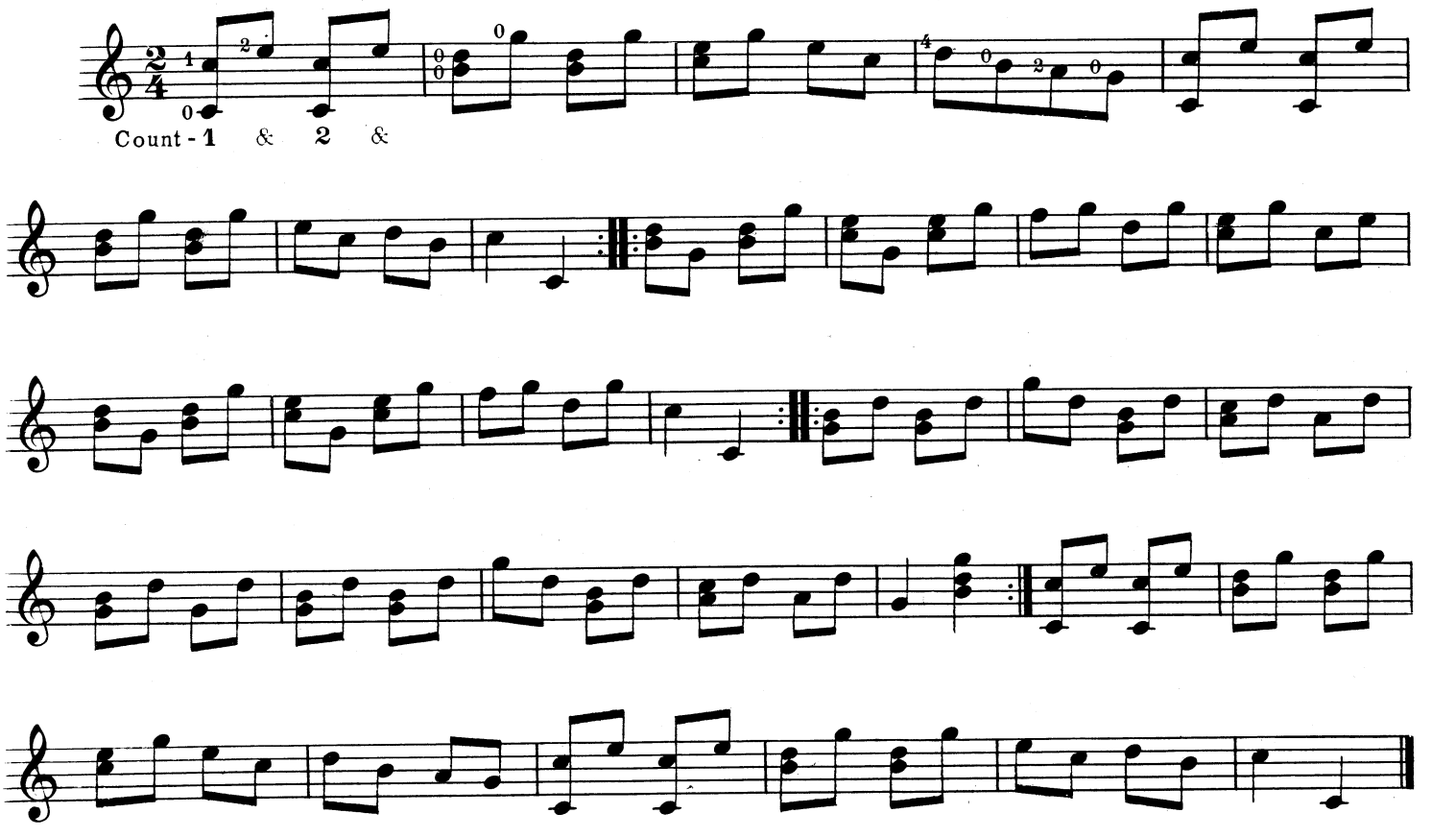


March

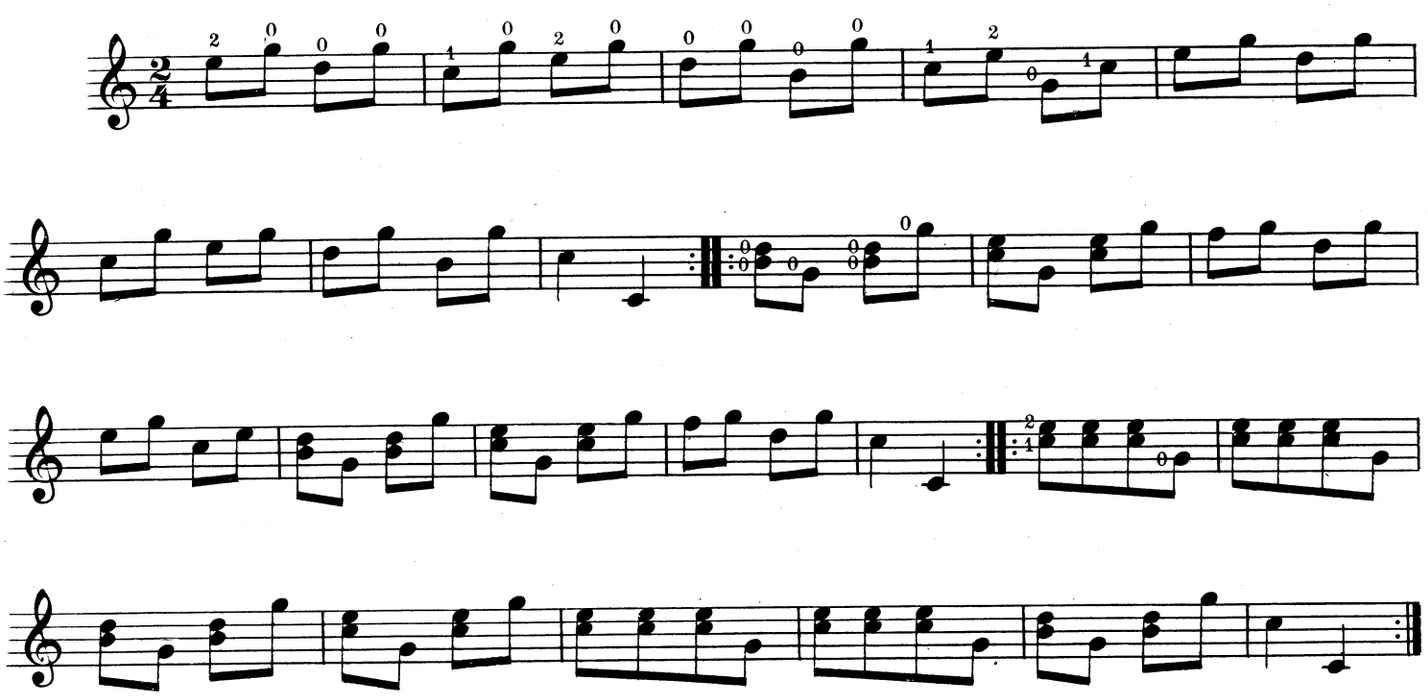


Polka Time

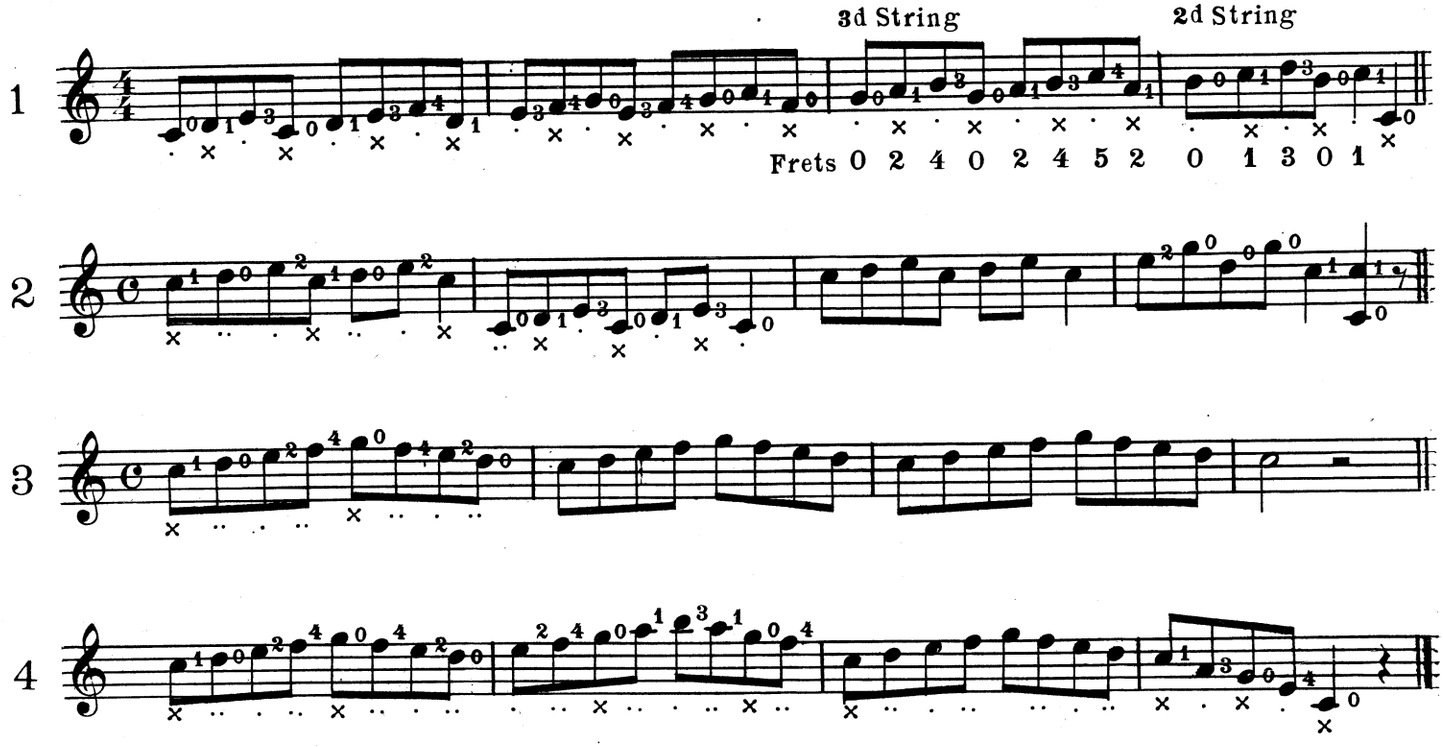
This exercise introduces eight notes. Count two beats in every measure, thus: one & two &, as shown in first measure.



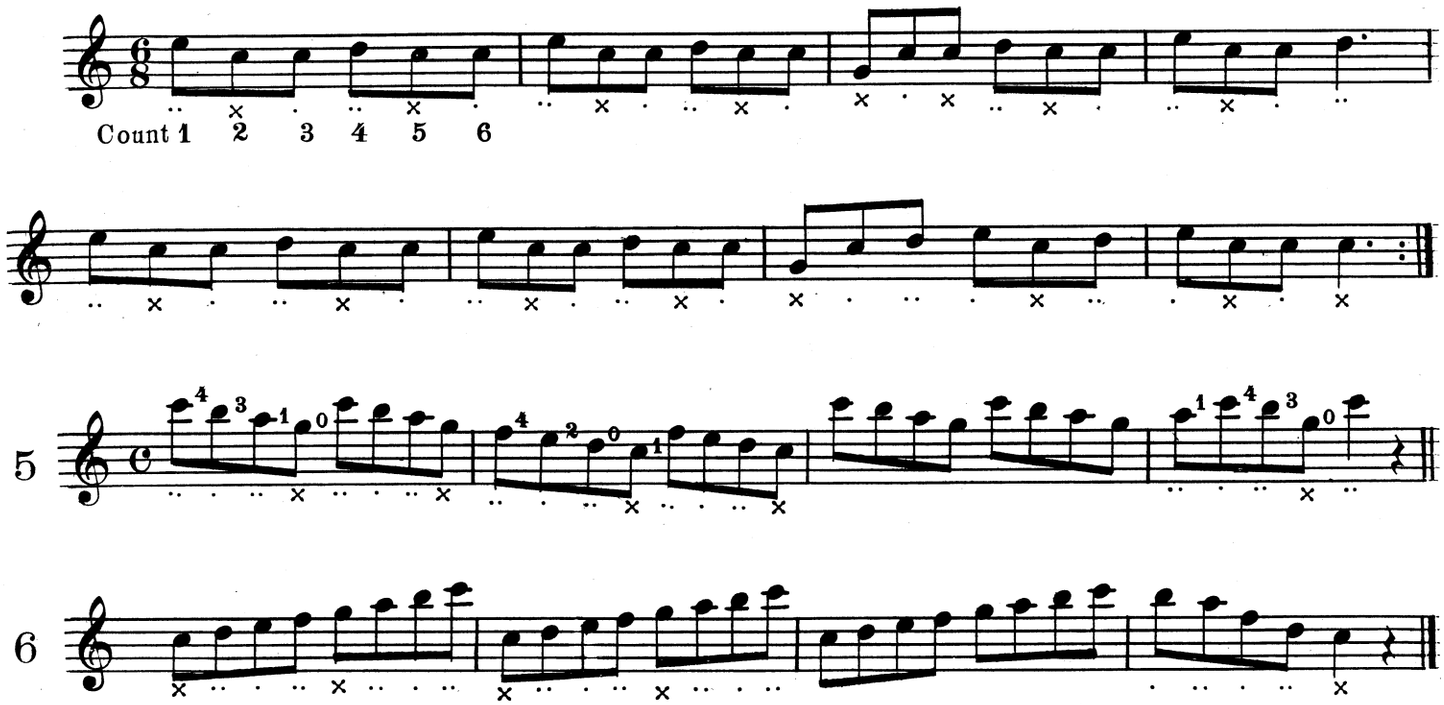
The following is a good exercise for gaining speed in Polka time.



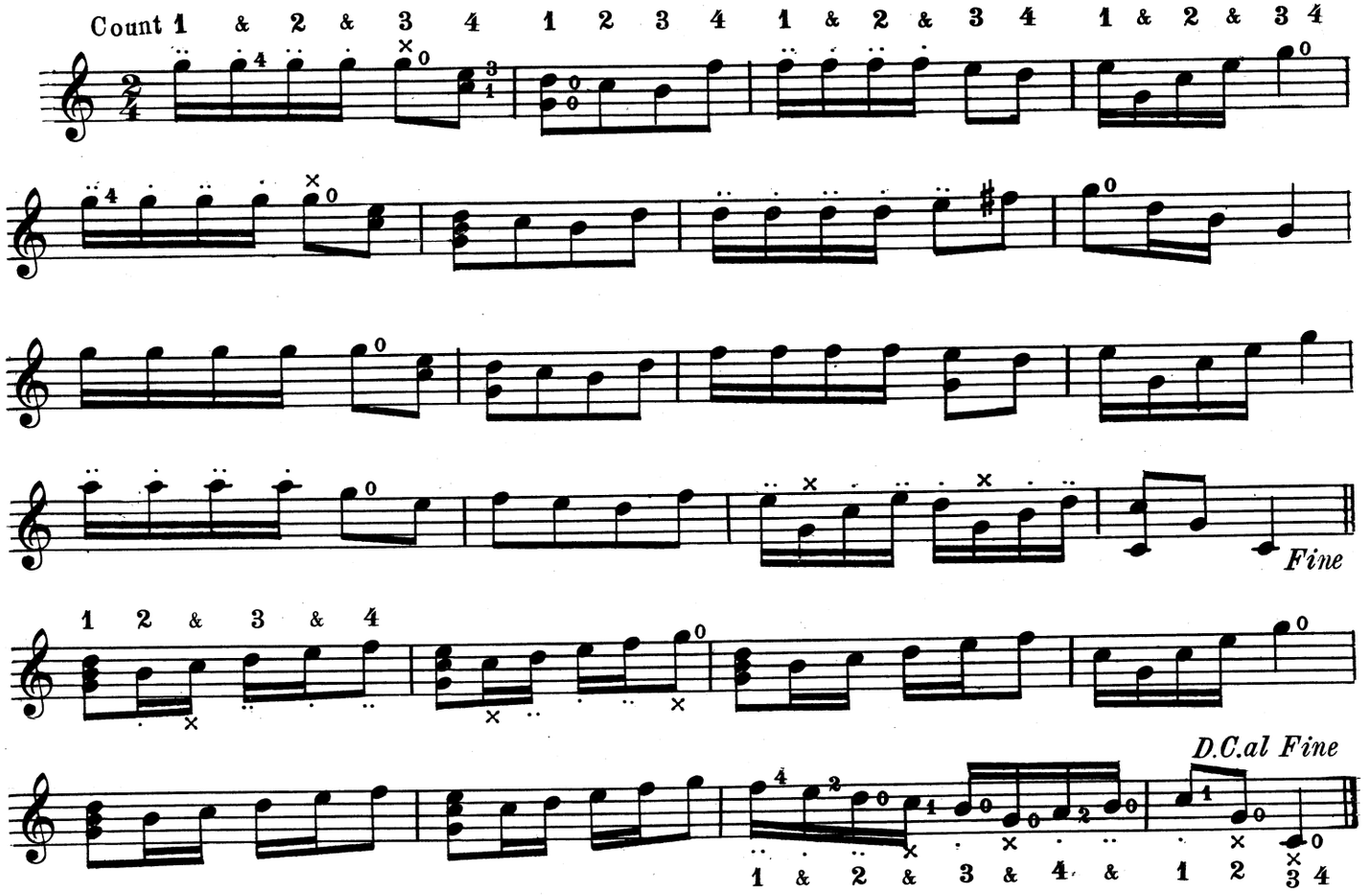
Exercises using alternate right hand fingering



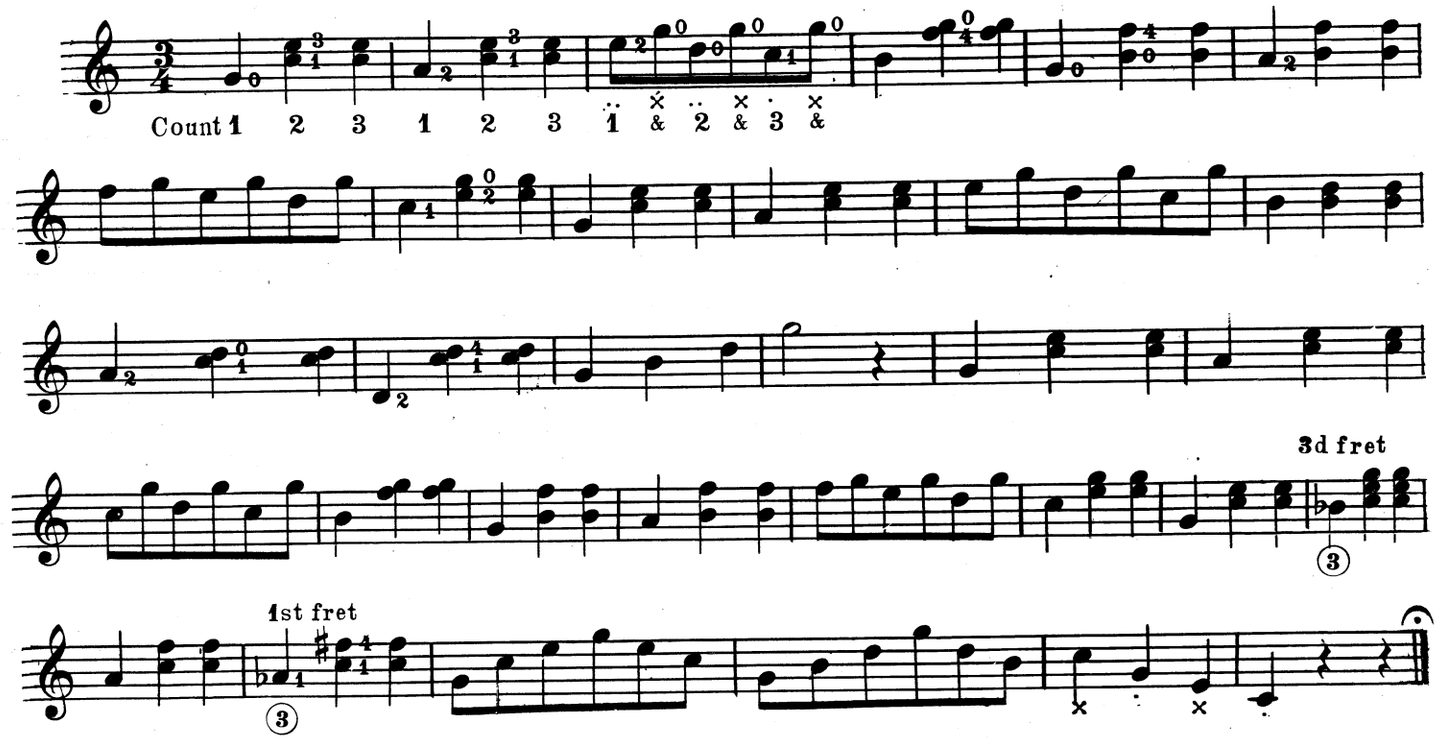
Irish Jig



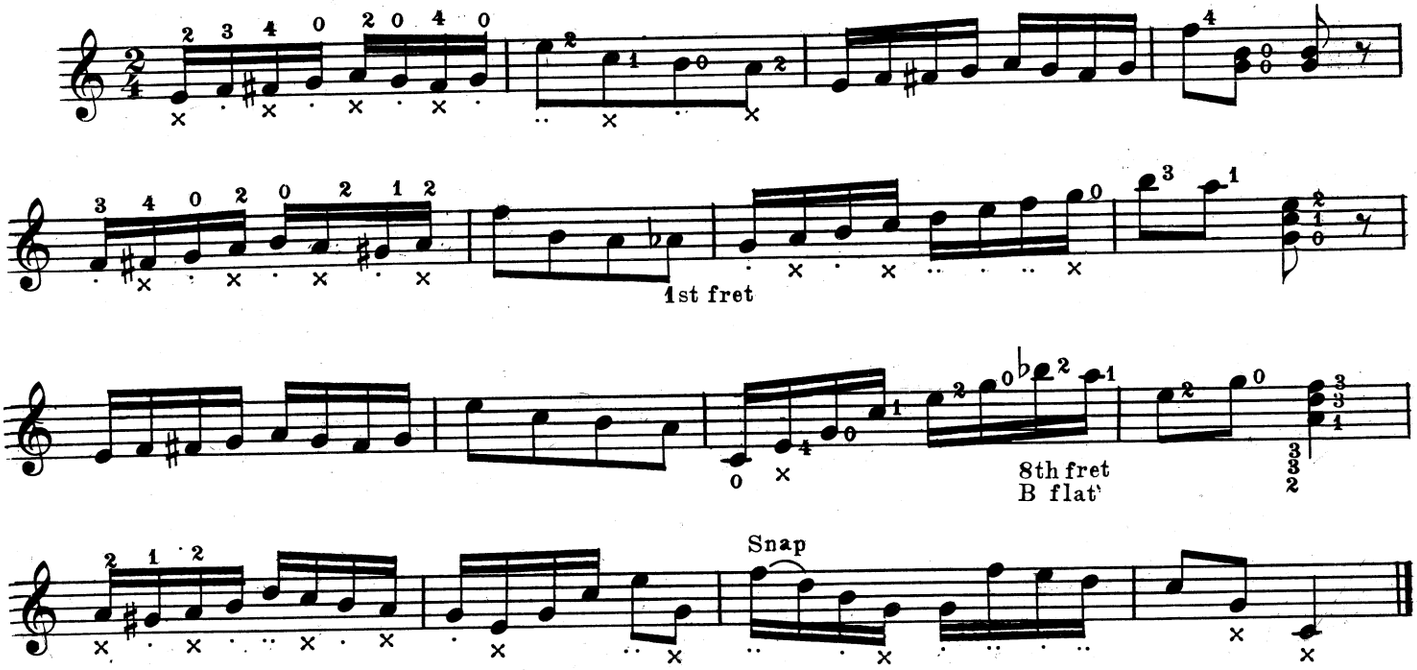
Golden Rod Polka



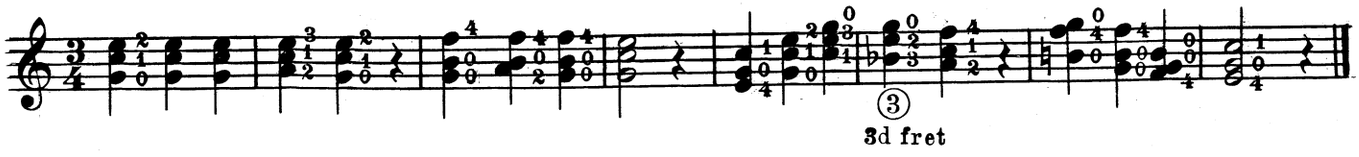
School Days Waltz



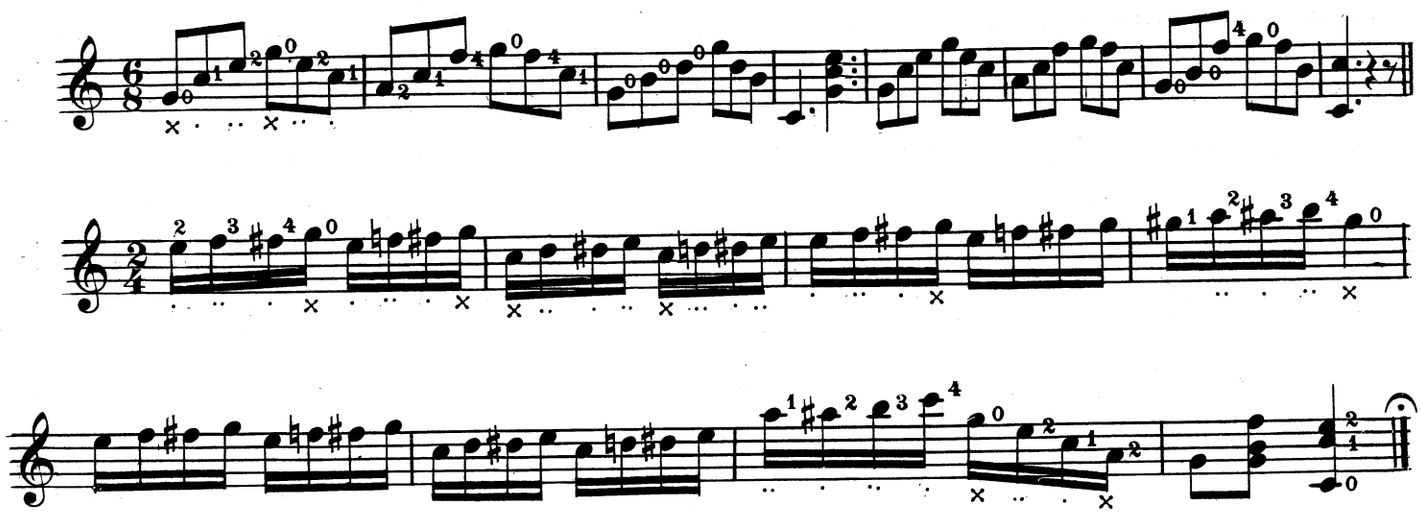
In Polka time



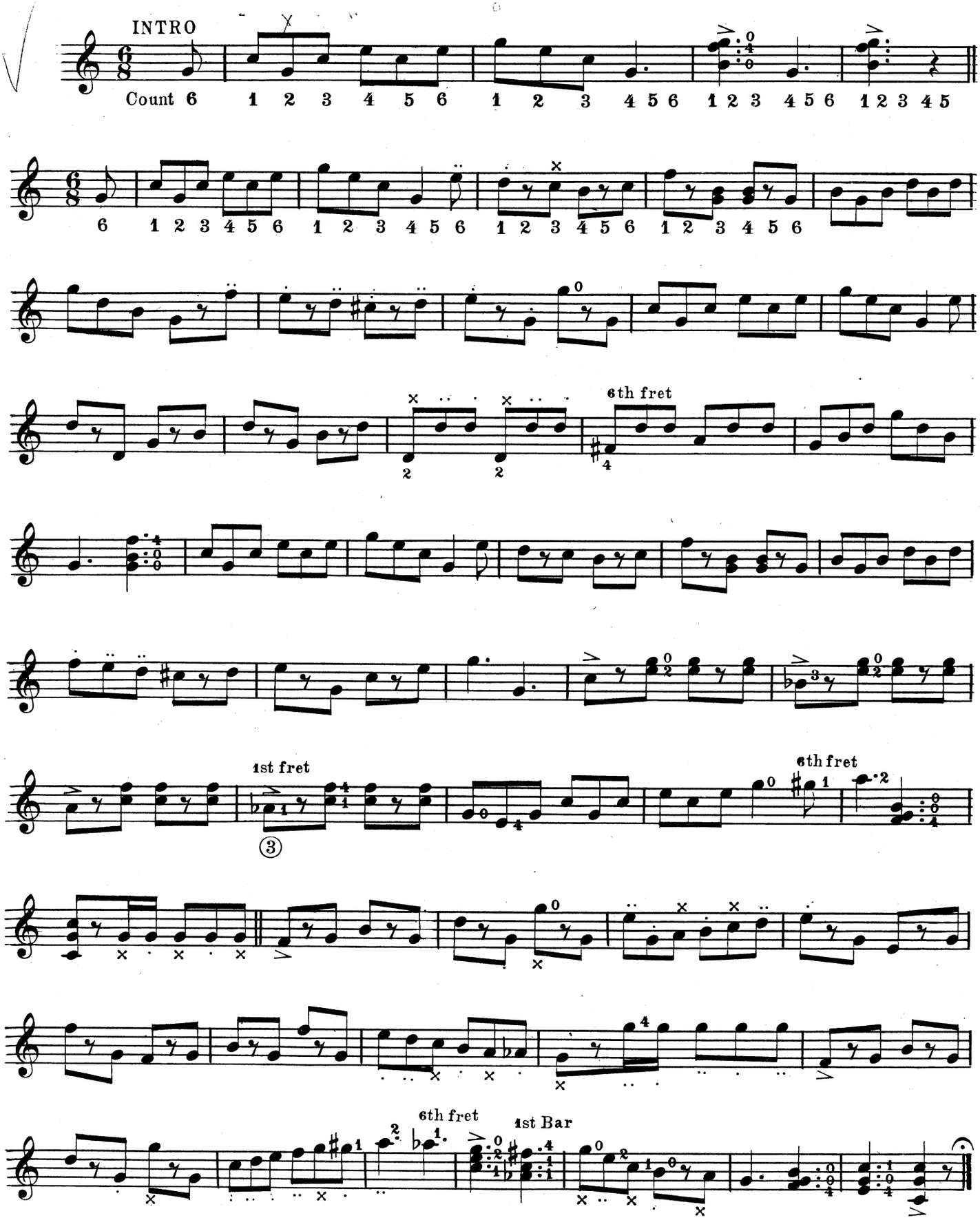
Chord study in first position



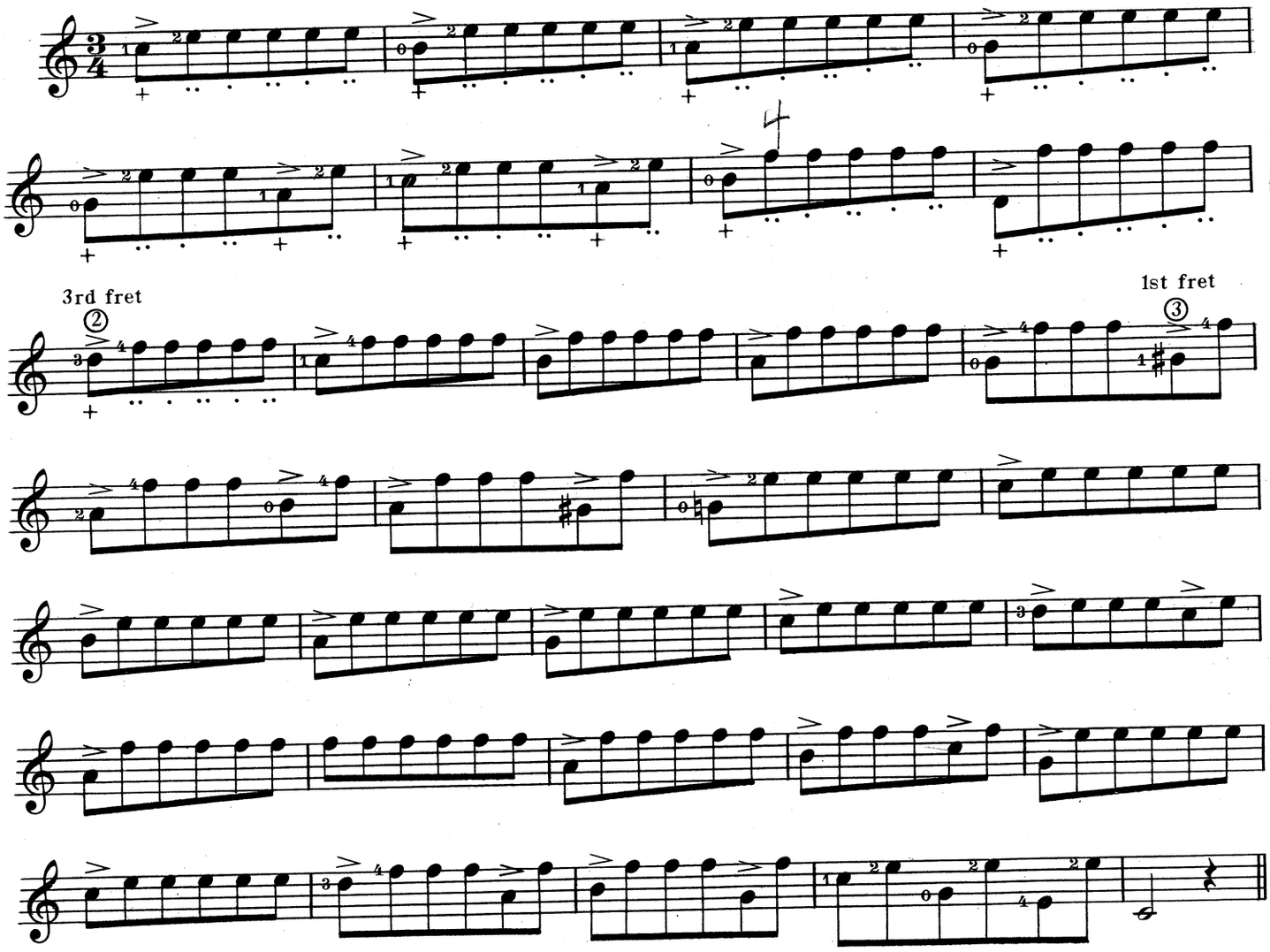
Arpeggios in first position



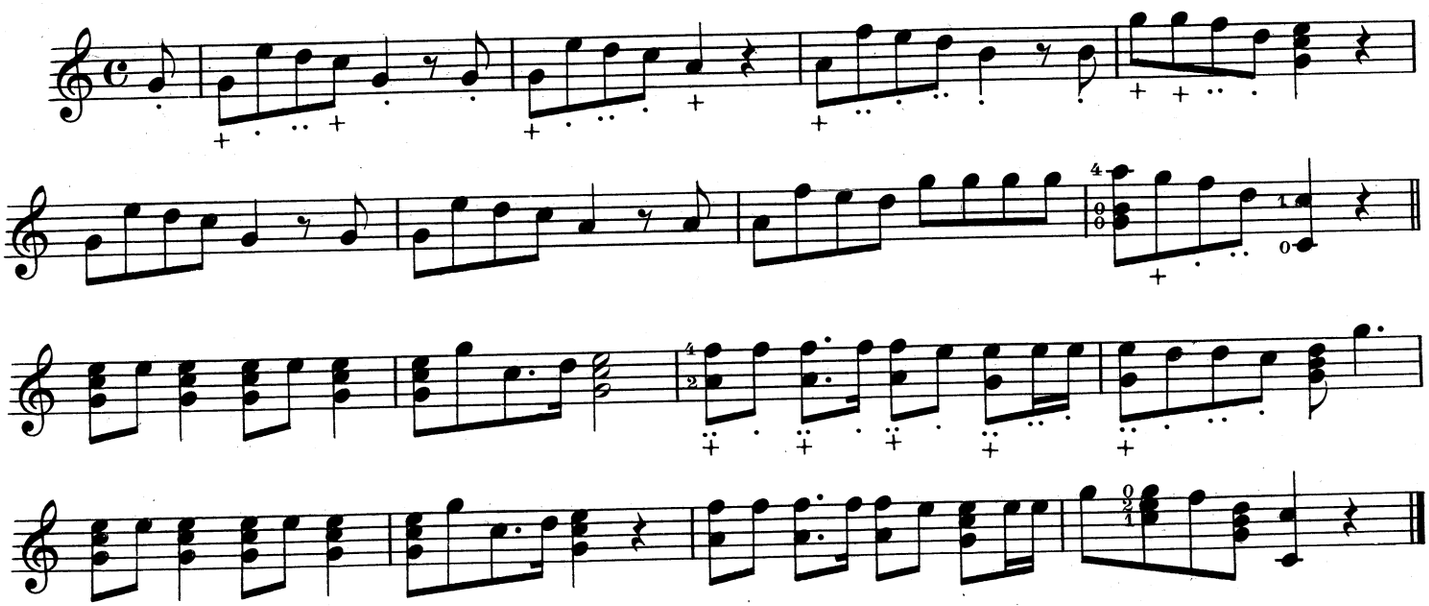
March The Soldier Boy



MELODY EXERCISE

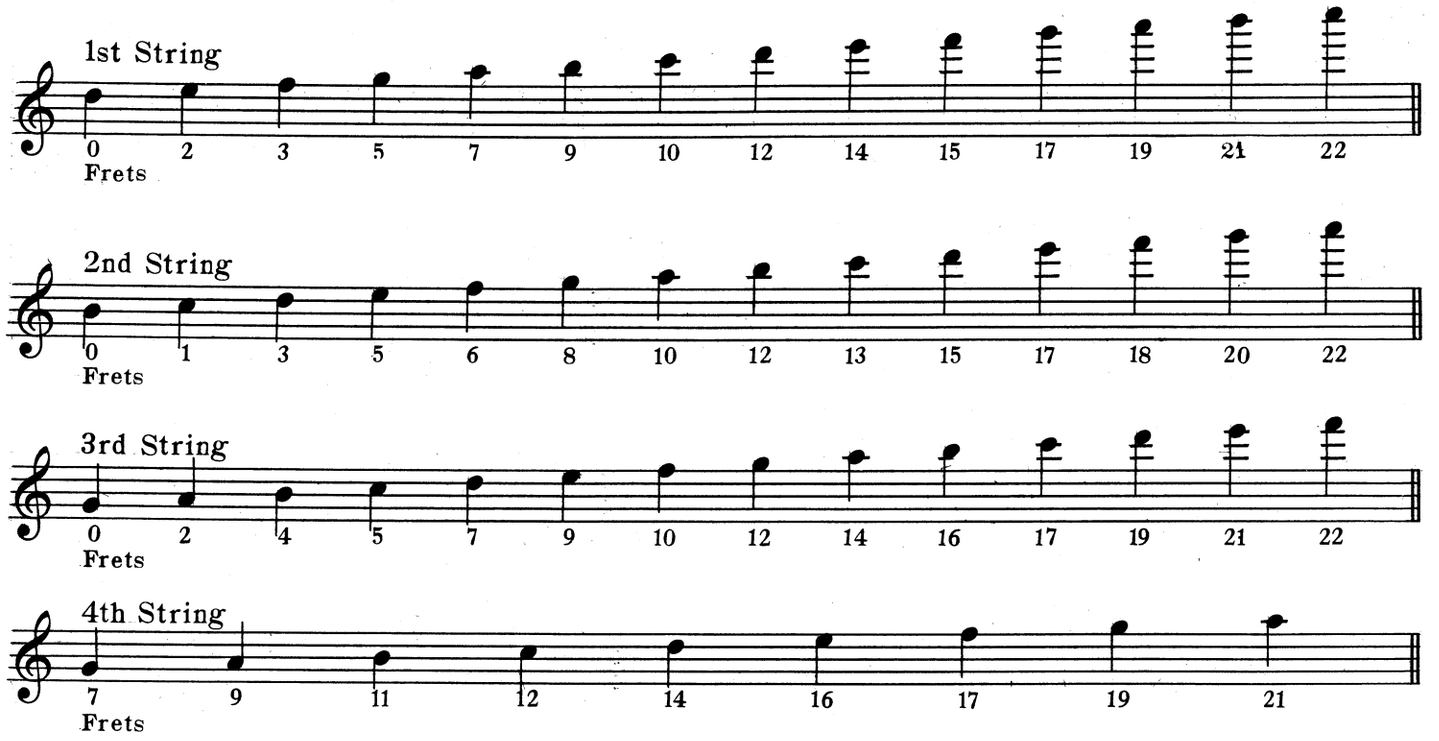


Jingle Bells

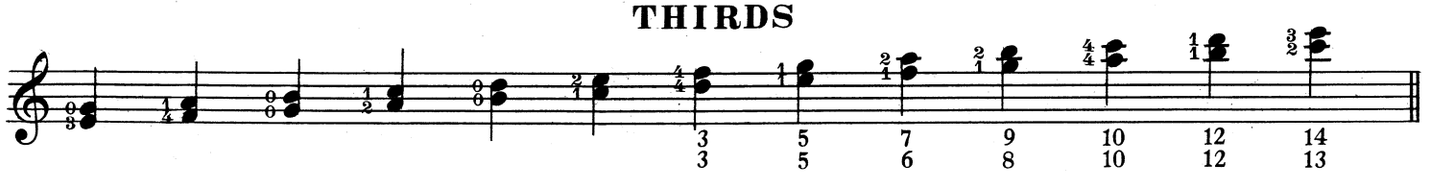


The following illustration shows where the same note can be played on the different strings. The student will observe that notes played on the 1st string, can be found on the 2nd string three frets higher. Notes on the 2nd string can be found on the 3rd string, four frets higher. Notes on the 3rd string can be found on the 4th string seven frets higher.

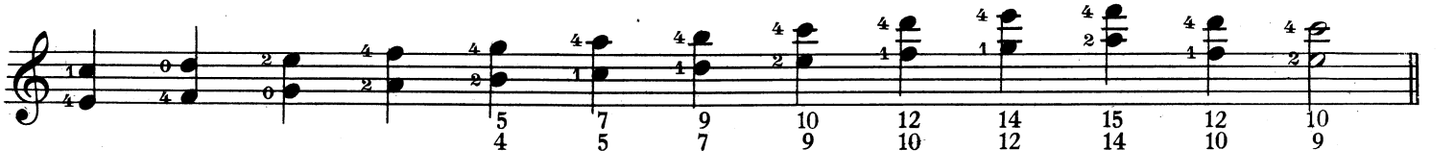
In other words it is *three* from the 1st to the 2nd string, *four* from the 2nd to 3rd string and *seven* from the 3rd to 4th string. Just remember 3, 4, and 7.



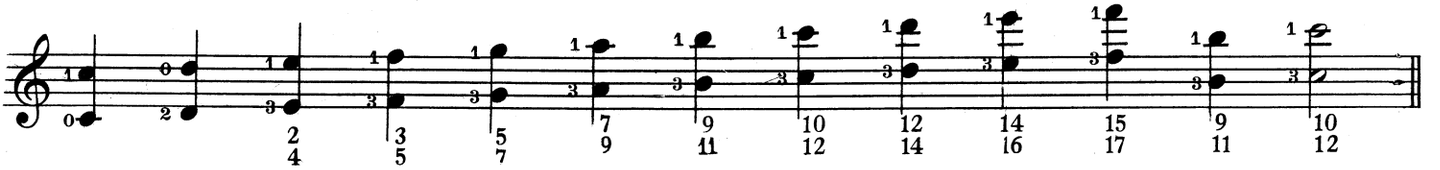
THIRDS



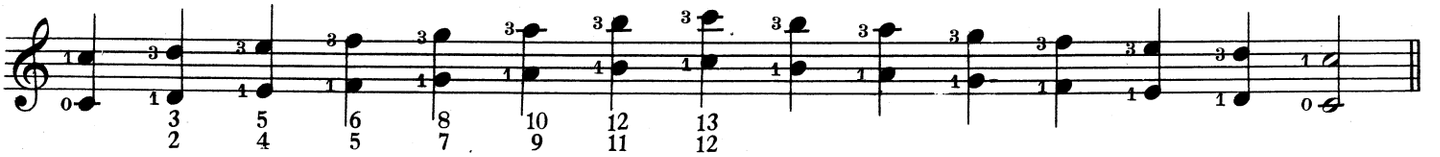
SIXTHS



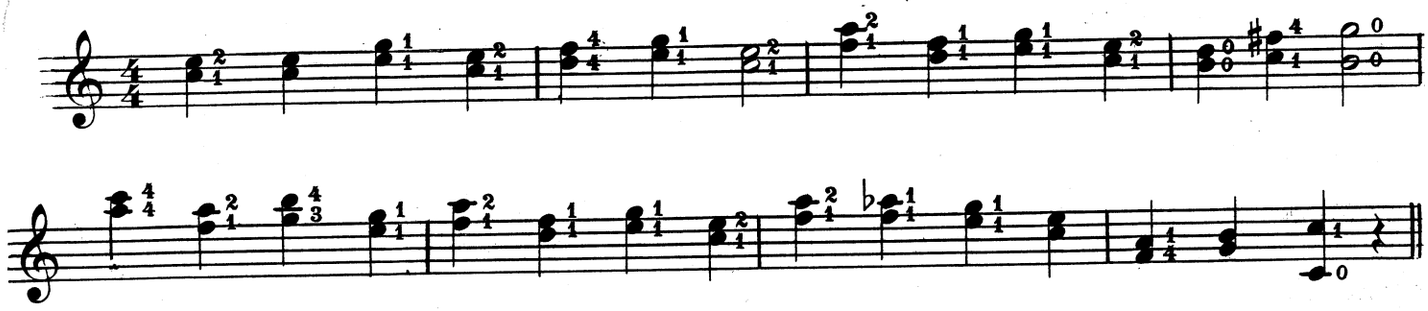
OCTAVES



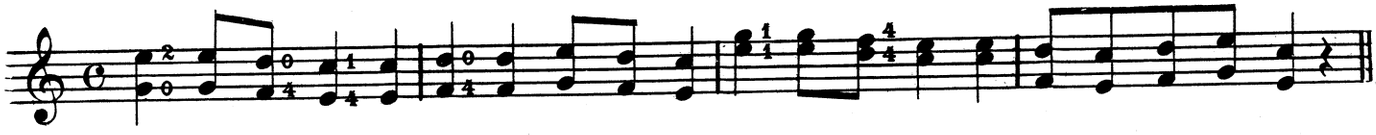
OCTAVES PLAYED ON THE 2nd AND 3rd STRINGS



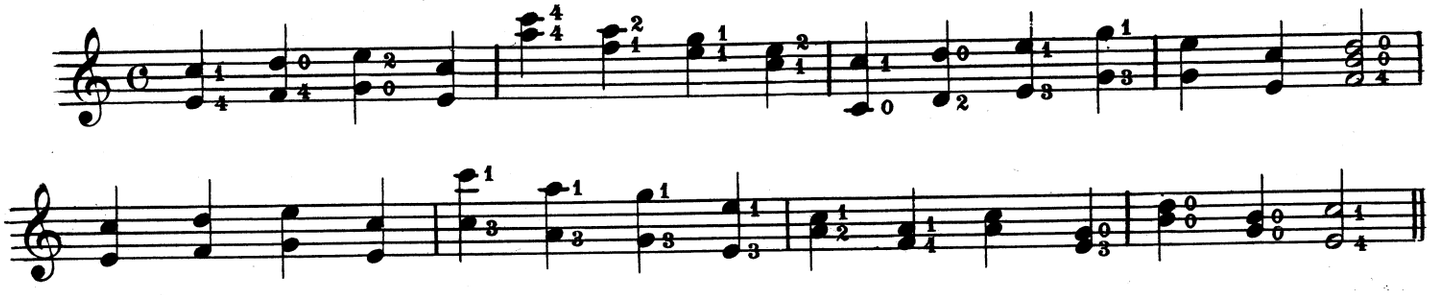
Exercise in Thirds



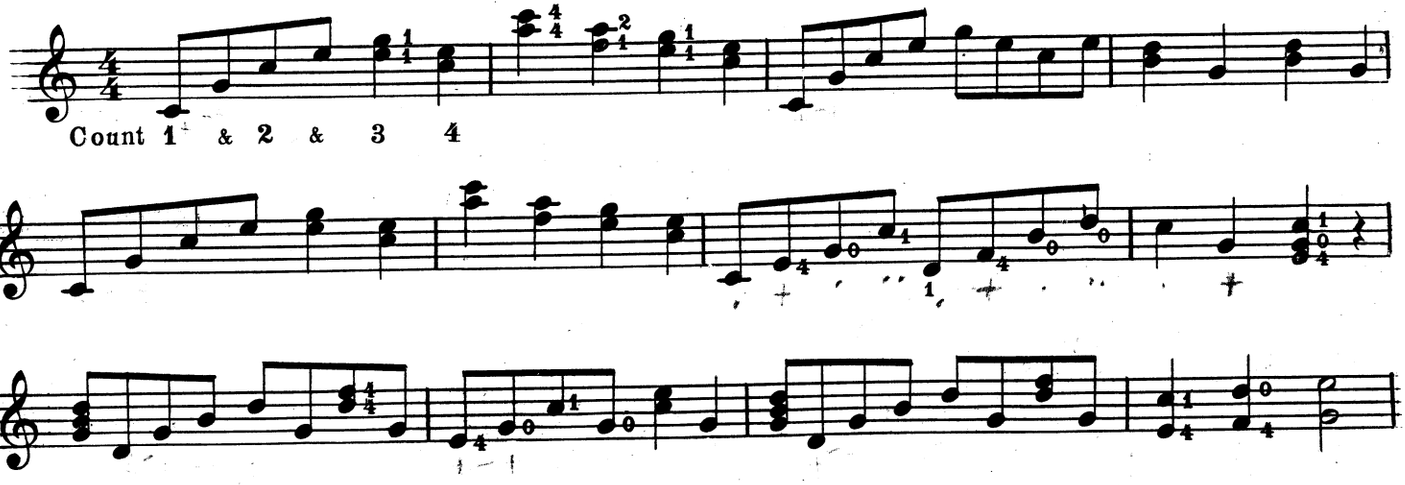
Exercise Melody in Sixths



Exercise in Thirds, Sixths and Octaves

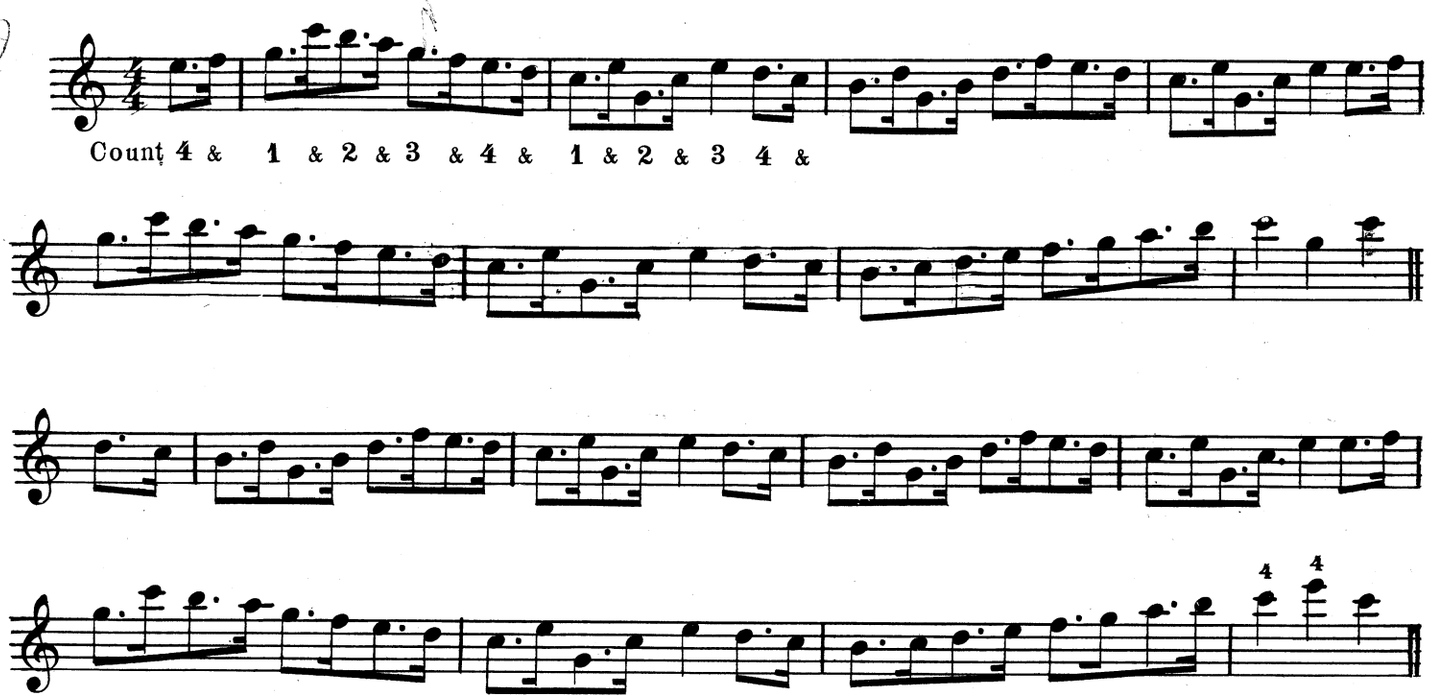


Exercise Melody



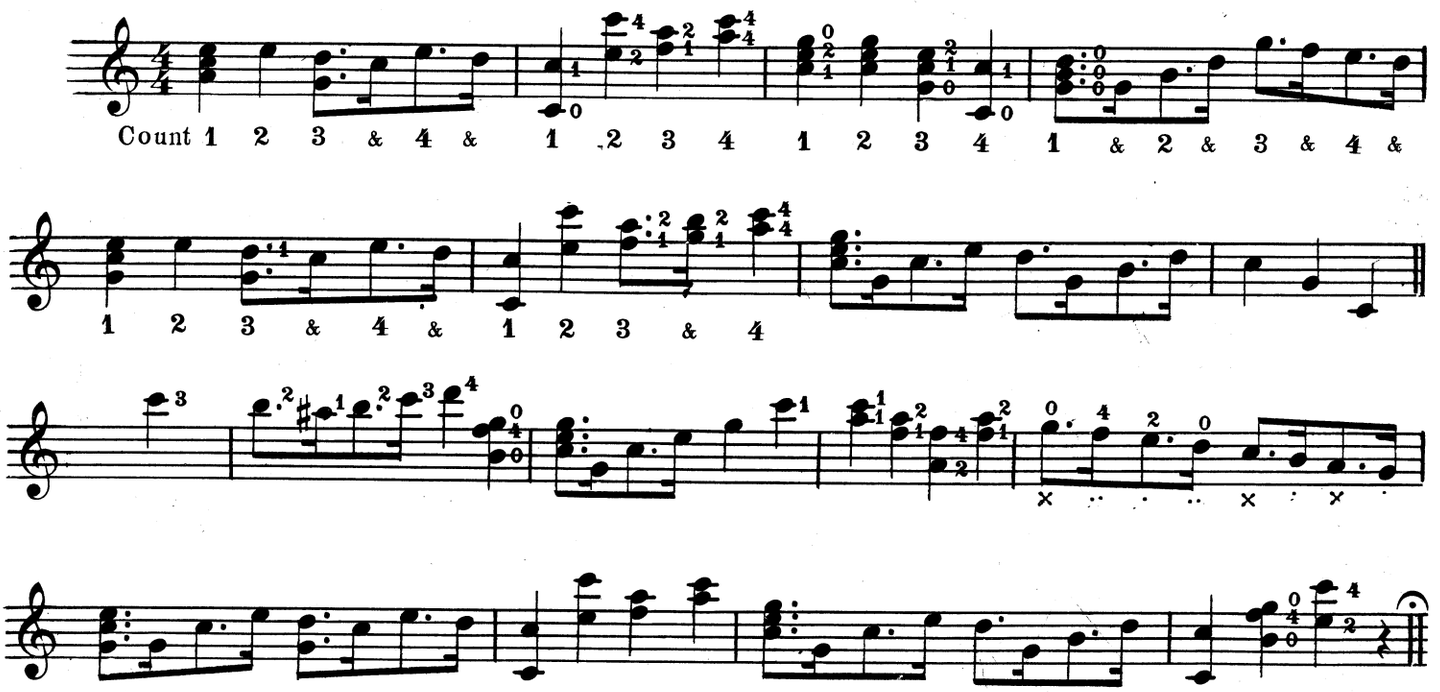
Lancashire Clog

A slight Pause should be made on each dotted 8th note.
Making up this time by playing the 16 th note a little faster.



Swanee River

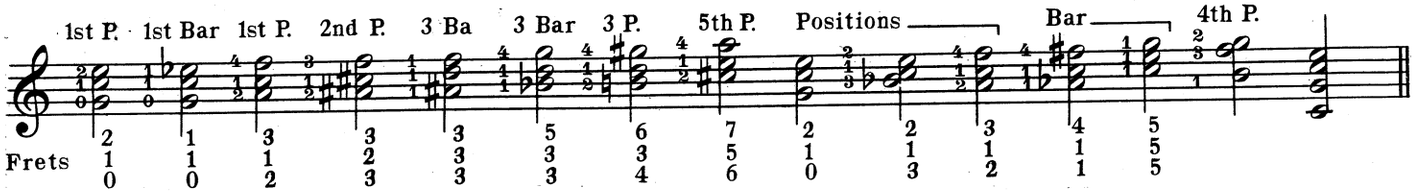
Schottische time



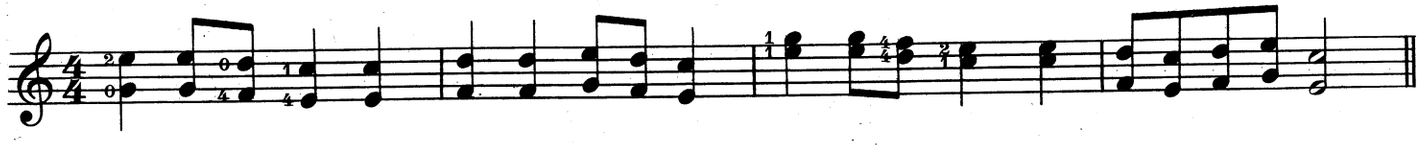
We are now ready to take up the study of Positions and Barre Chords. On every fret there can be made a *position* or *bar*. A Position is when the first finger of the left hand is placed on *one* string *only* and the other finger or fingers, are used at the same time on the other strings.

A Position is written with a * or "Pos." or the letter "P."

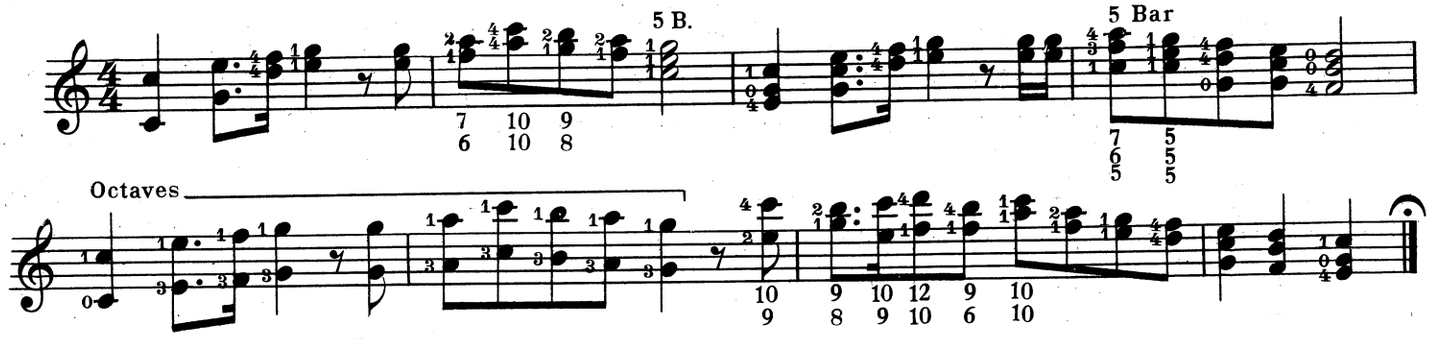
A Barre Chord or Bar. More often the letter "B" is used when the first finger of the left hand is laid across two or more strings. It is named after the fret the first finger rests on.



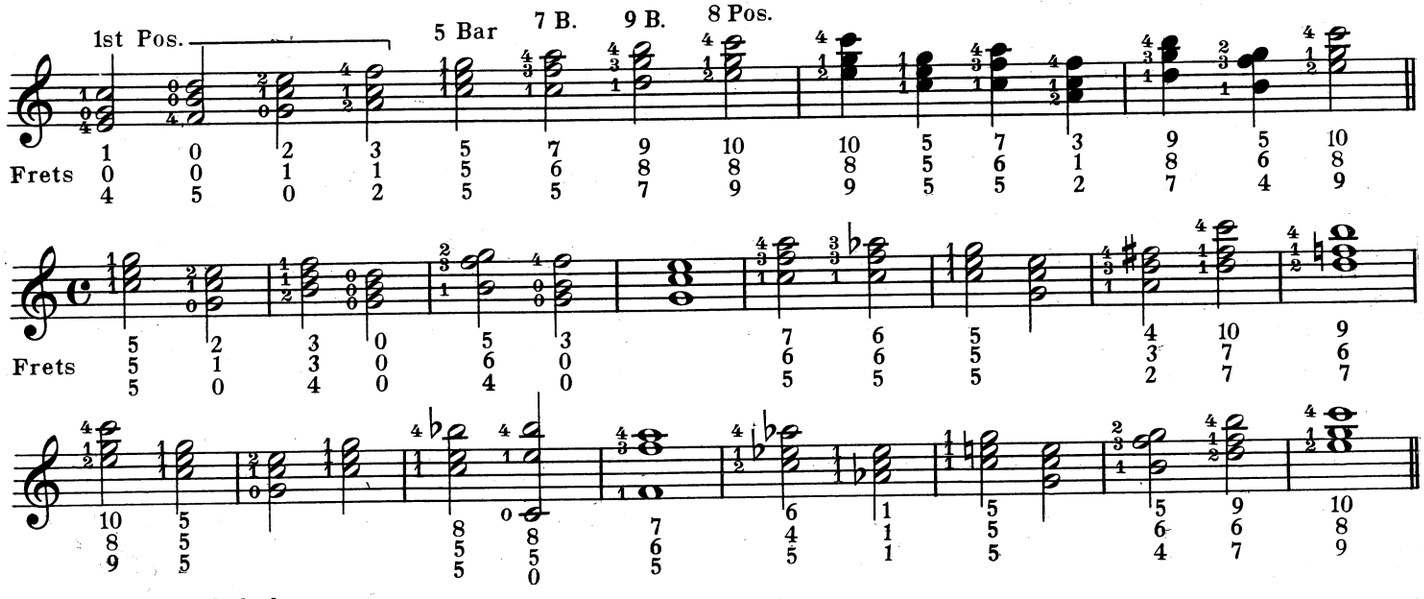
EXERCISE MELODY IN SIXTHS AND THIRDS



Old Black Joe



POSITIONS AND BARRE CHORDS

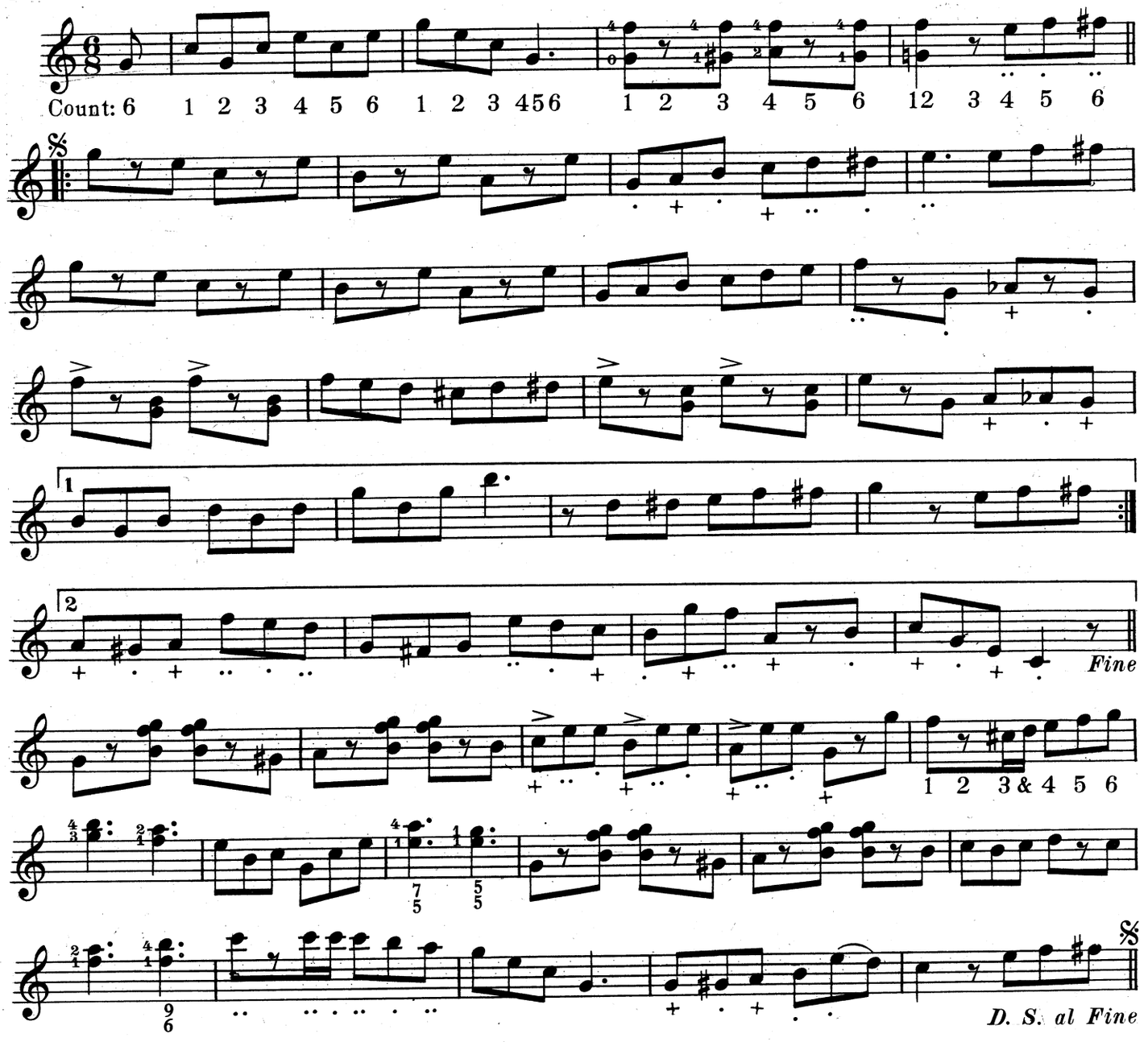


On The Trail

March

F. J. B.

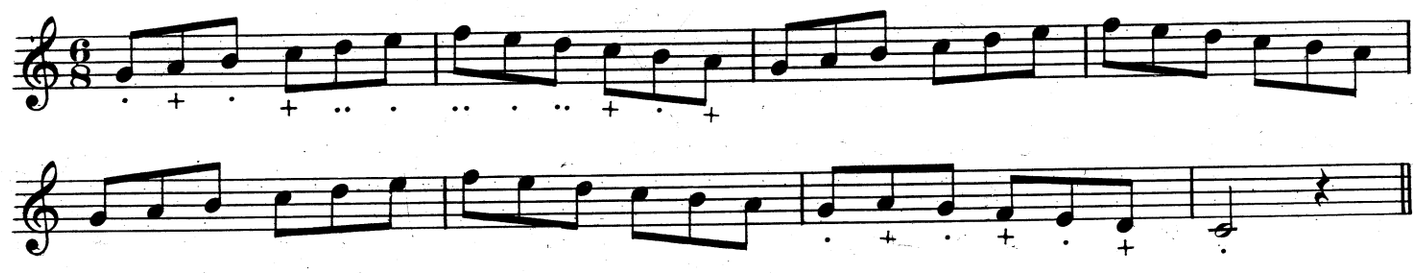
6/8 time – count 6 to each measure.
1 count to each 8th note. 2 counts to each quarter note. 3 counts to a dotted quarter note.



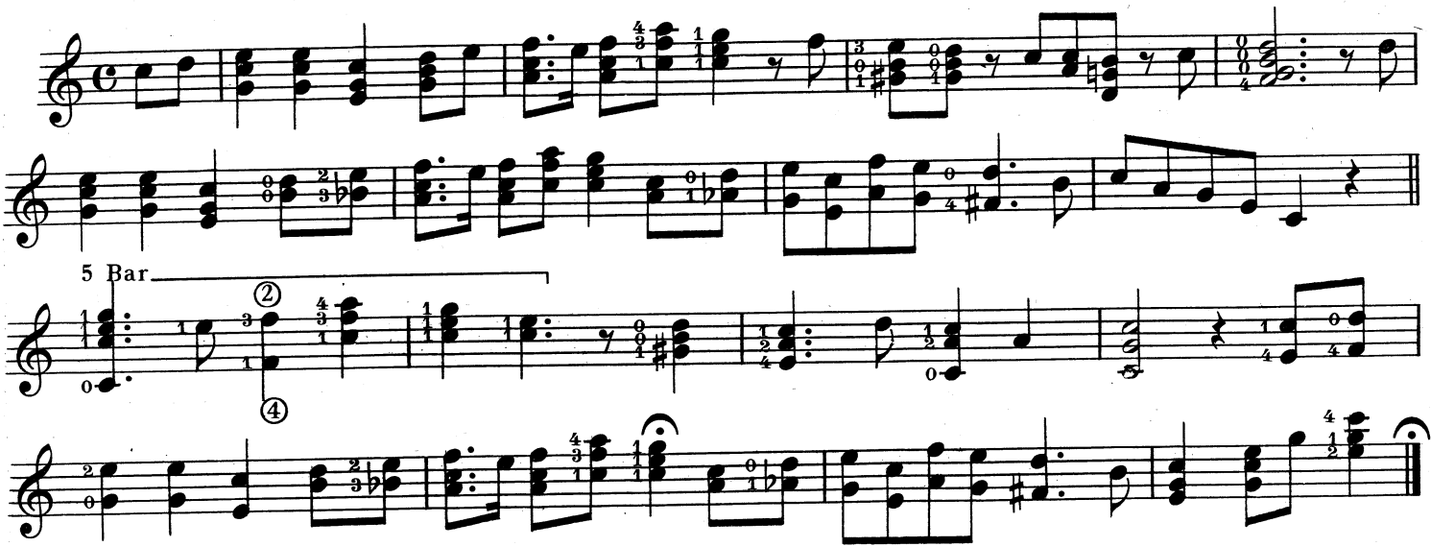
The following is excellent right and left hand finger practice, and should be played until considerable rapidity is developed.

It is absolutely necessary to use the alternate right hand fingering as marked if you wish to execute rapid passages smoothly.

EXERCISE



My Old Kentucky Home



THE MINOR KEYS

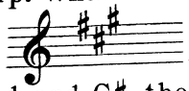
Every Major Key has a relative Minor, which bear the same signature as the Major. When changing to a Minor Key from a Major the change is in Harmony and very pleasing to the ear. The same applies when changing from a Minor to its relative Major.

The Sixth note of a Major Scale or Key is the key note to its relative minor. The relative Major Key to any Minor Key is always a Minor third higher than the Minor Key. (A minor third is an interval composed of one and one half tones.)

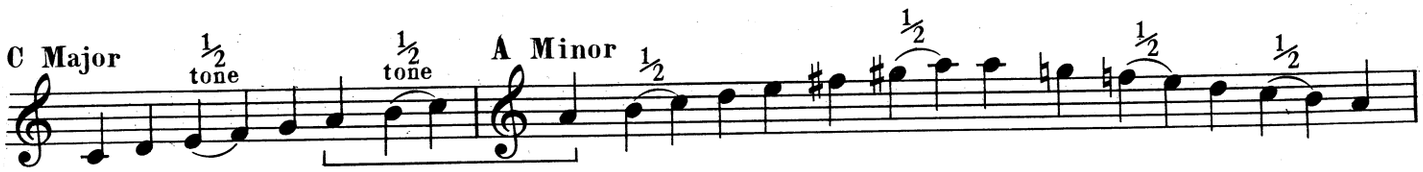
Major means *more* and Minor means *less*. There are three kinds of Minor Scales. We shall study only the "Melodic" Minor Scale, as it is the one in general use and more pleasant to the ear.

The Major Scale is composed of five tones and two half tones; the half tones coming only between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth notes.

The Minor Scale is also composed of five tones and two half tones, but the latter in the Minor Scale come between the 2nd and 3rd and the 7th 8th of the ascending scale, and between the 5th and 6th and the 2nd and 3rd of the descending scale. (*See illustration.*)

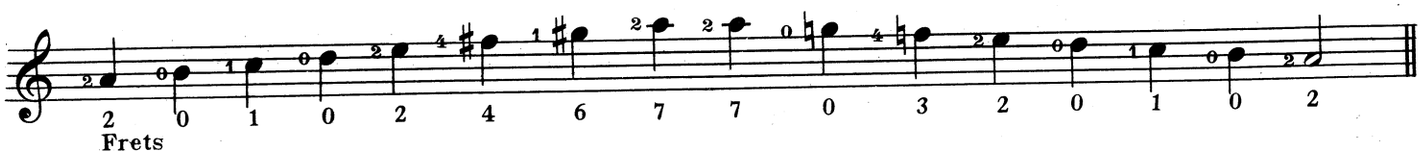
Two accidentals are always necessary for the ascending scale of the Melodic Minor, but they are cancelled when descending. The Major Key note is the first above the last sharp. When there are three sharps in the signature  F♯ would be the first, C♯ the second and G♯ the last. The name of the next note above G♯ would be "A" Consequently three sharps would be called the Key of "A."

The relative minor to "A" would be "F♯" because it is the 6th note of "A" Major.

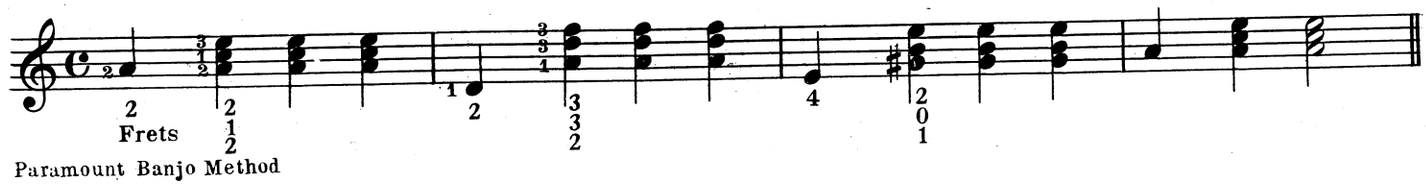


SCALE OF A MINOR

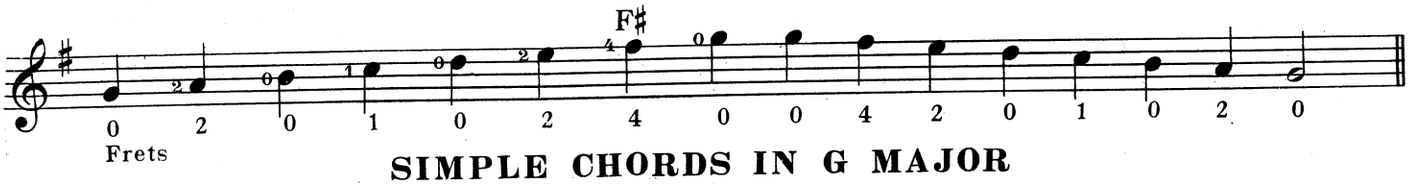
(RELATIVE TO C MAJOR)



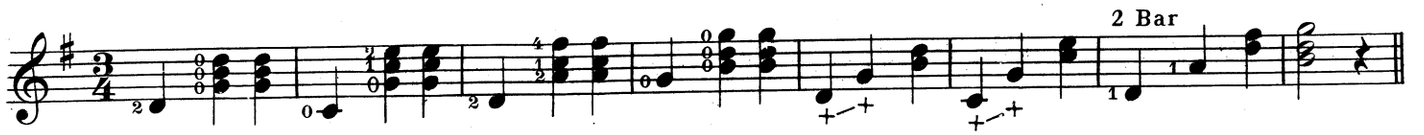
SIMPLE ACCOMPANIMENT CHORDS



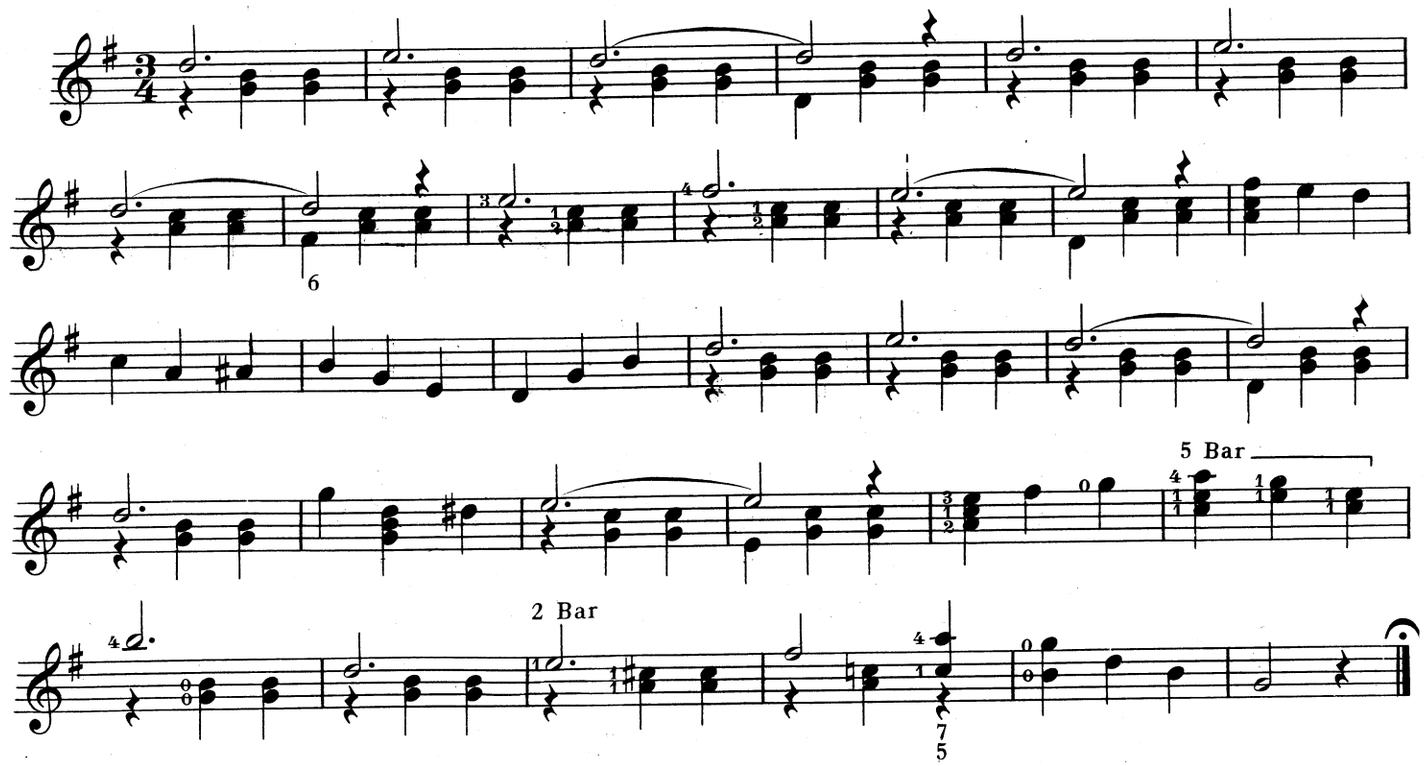
SCALE OF G MAJOR
(F Sharp)



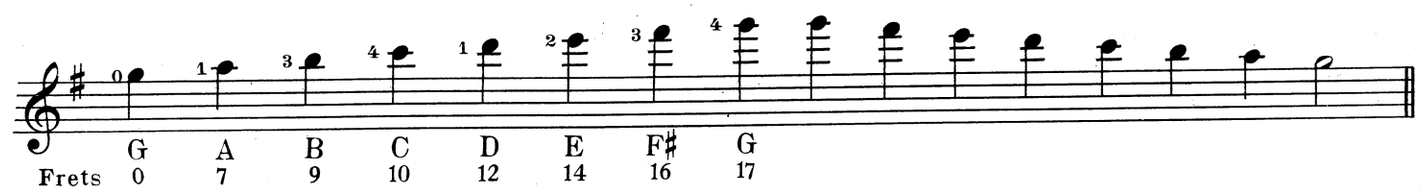
SIMPLE CHORDS IN G MAJOR



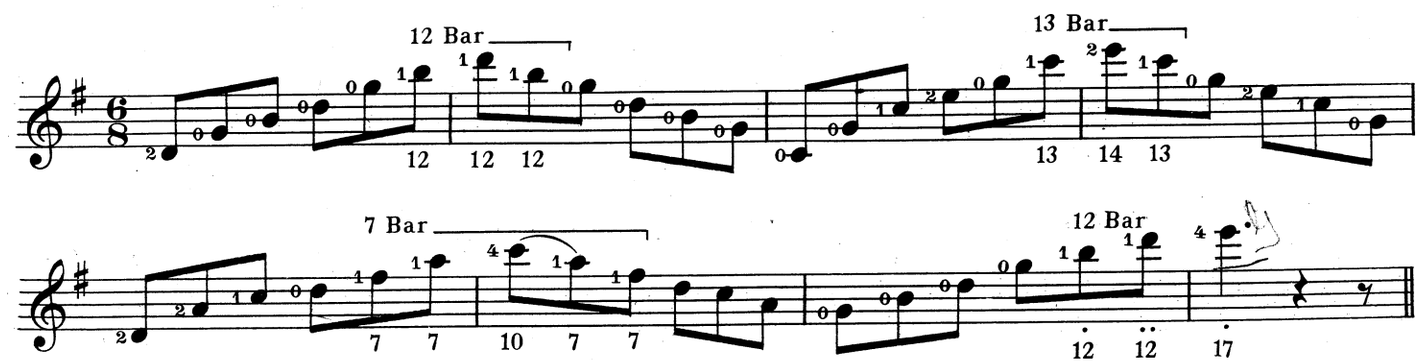
In the Moonlight Waltz



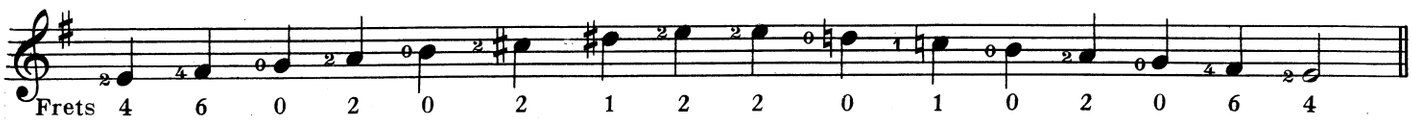
SCALE OF G MAJOR (2nd Octave)



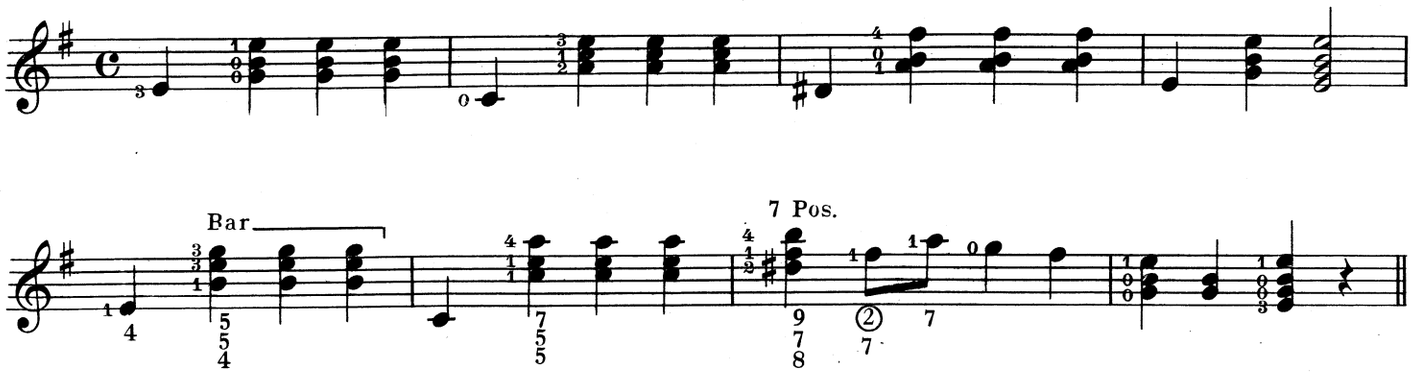
EXERCISE IN G MAJOR



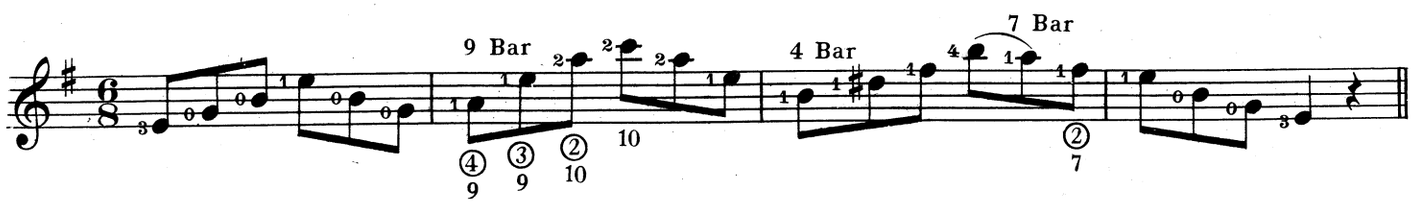
SCALE OF E MINOR
(RELATIVE TO G MAJOR)



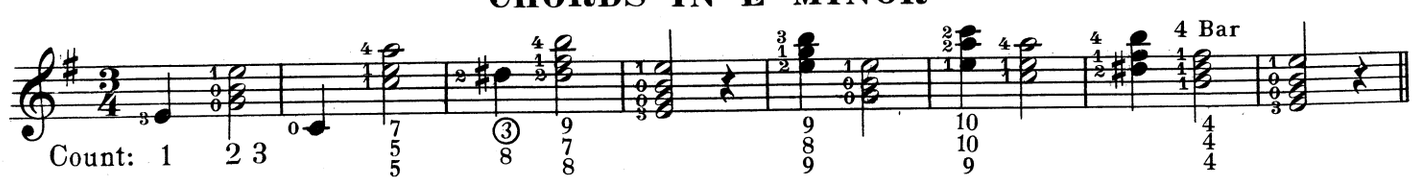
SIMPLE CHORDS IN E MINOR



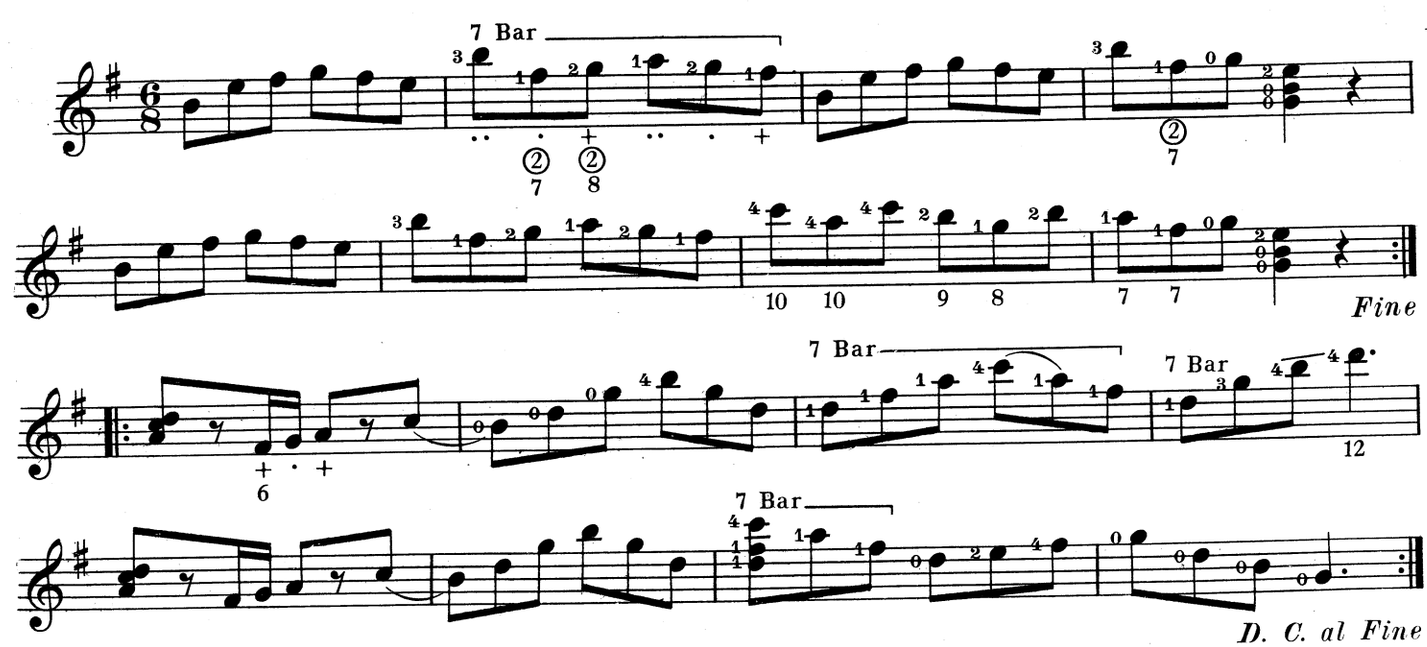
EXERCISE IN E MINOR



CHORDS IN E MINOR

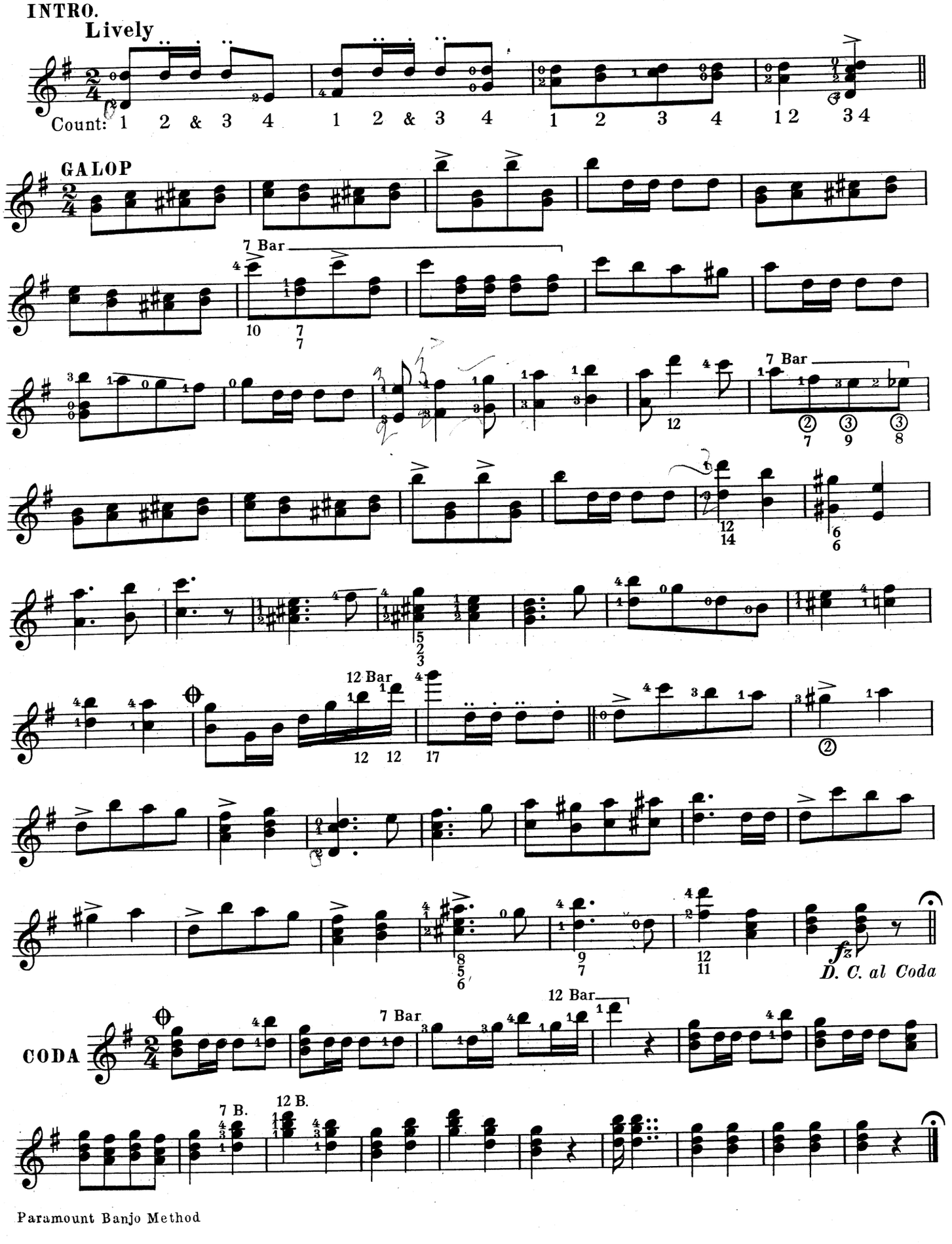


Petite Tarantelle

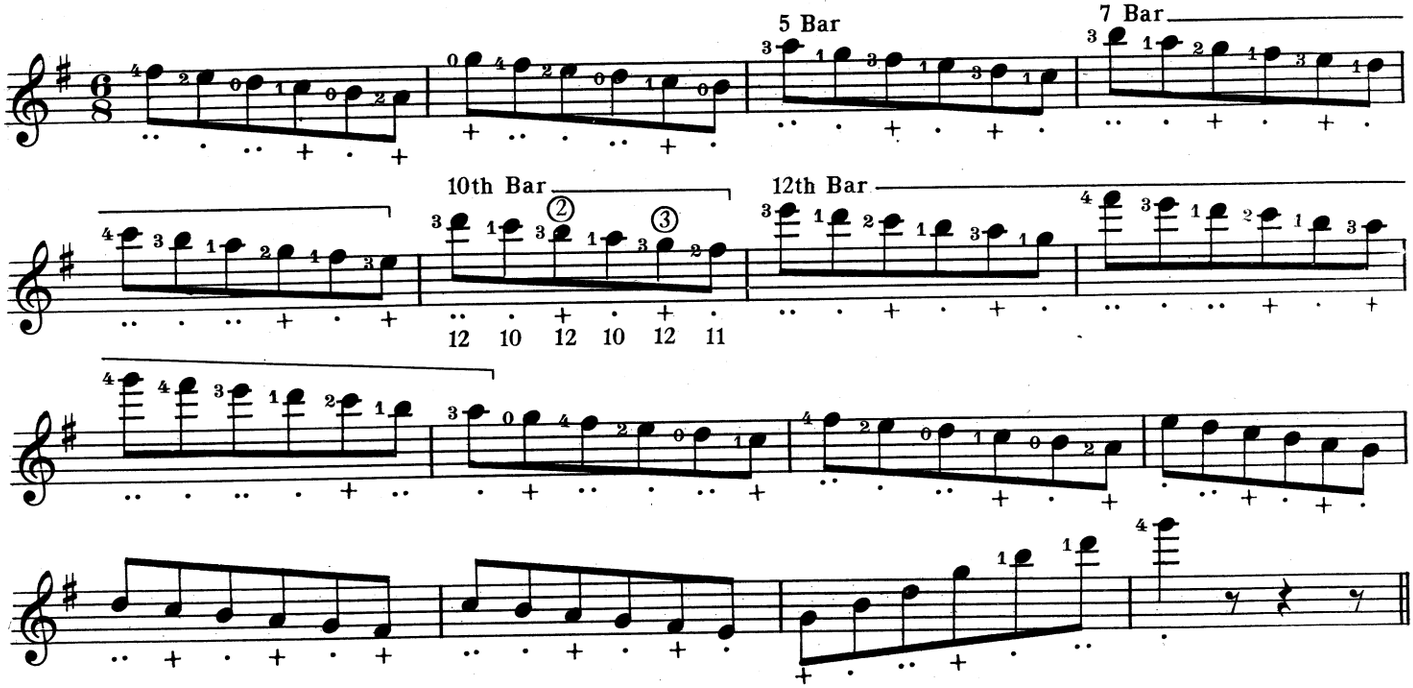


At the Races Galop

Count 4 to a measure 1 beat to each 8th note, 2 to each quarter note.



SCALE PRACTICE IN DIFFERENT POSITIONS

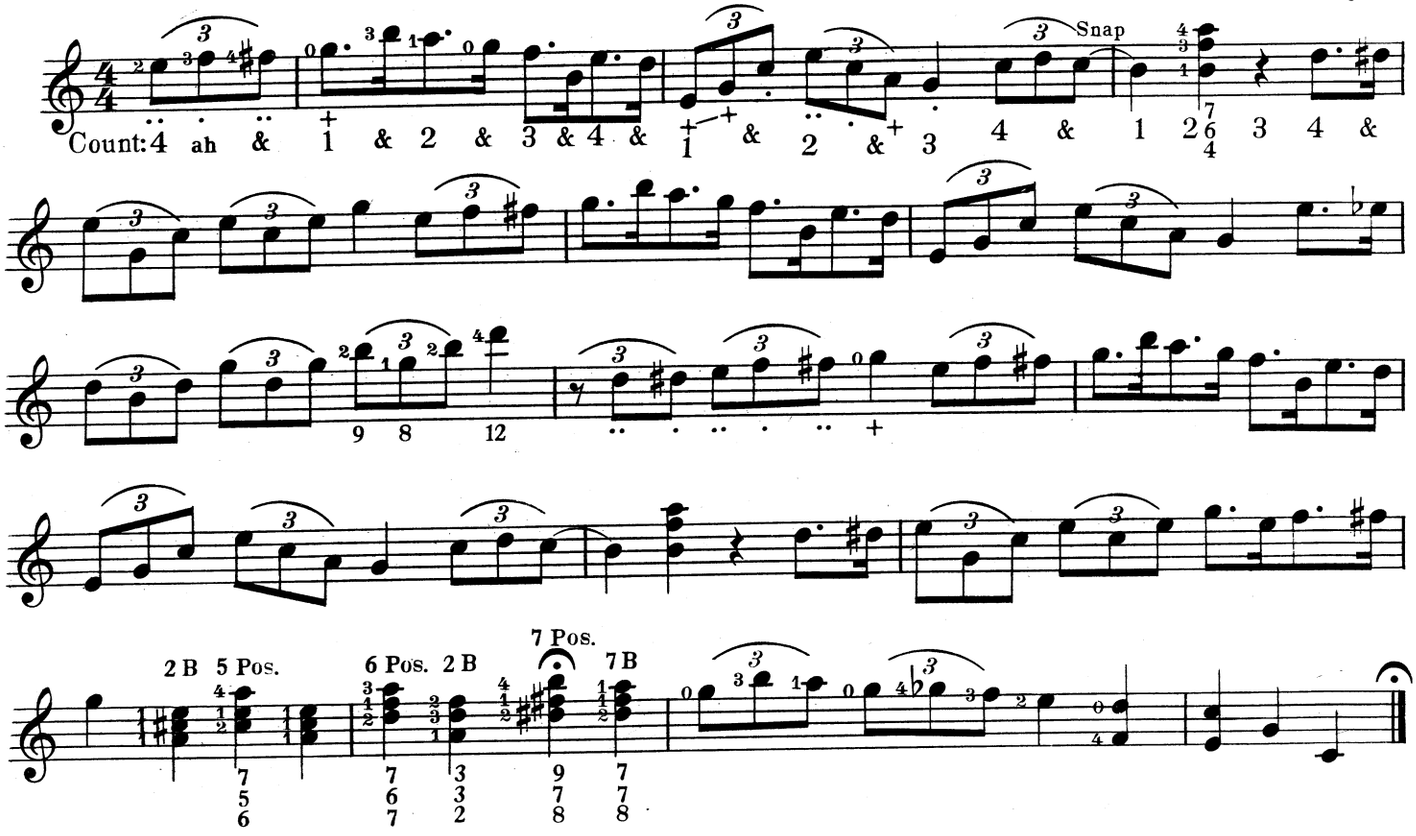


Three notes with a figure *3* written over or under them are called a *triplet*. The *3* written above indicates that the three notes are played in the time of two of the same denomination. A group of six notes with a figure *6* placed over or under them signifies that they are to be played in the time of four notes of the same denomination. A grace note thus; is a small note and is always played very quickly. It has very little time value.

Dancing Sunbeams

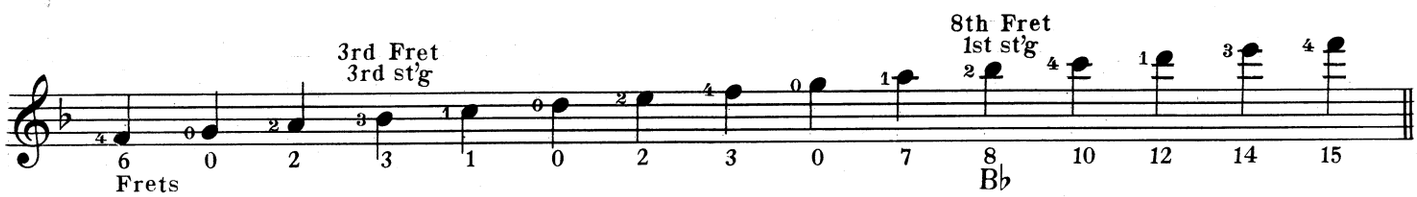
Schottische

F. J. B.

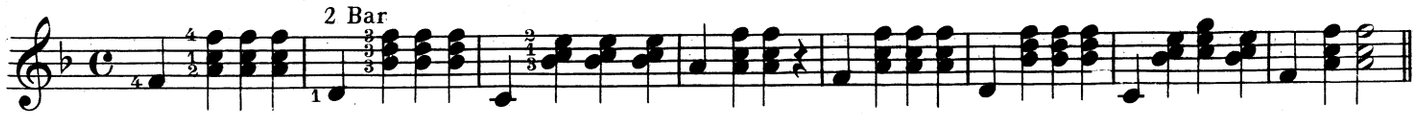


SCALE OF F MAJOR

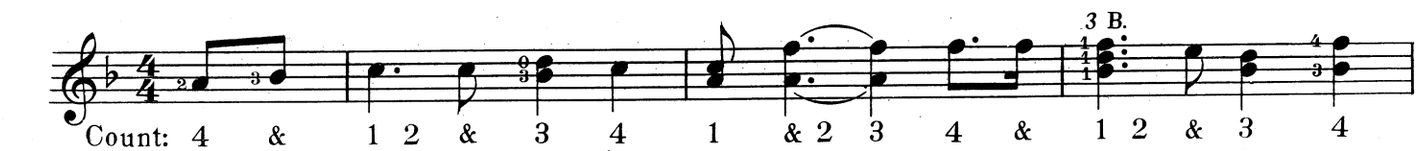
(B Flat)

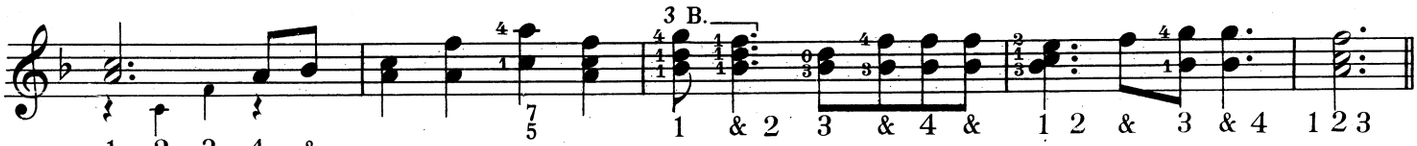


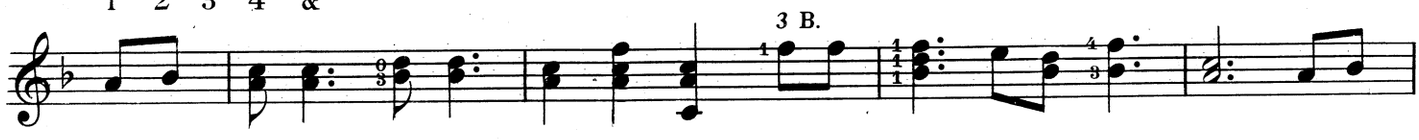
SIMPLE CHORDS IN F MAJOR

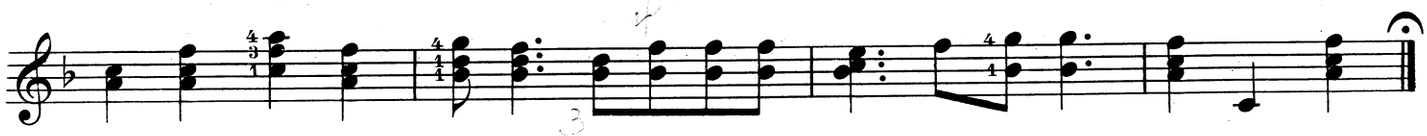


The Quilting Party

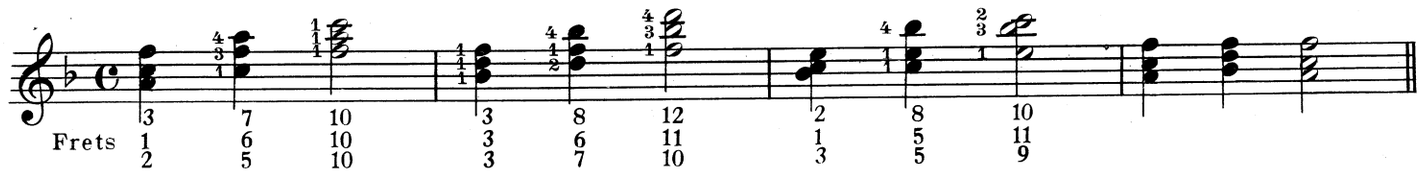






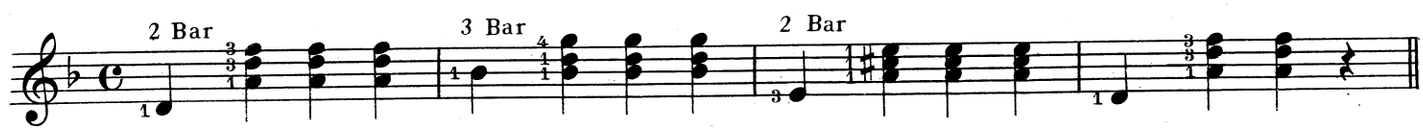


CHORDS IN F MAJOR

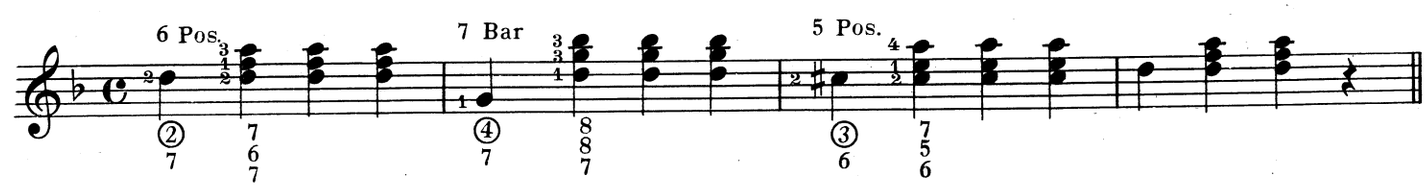


CHORDS IN D MINOR

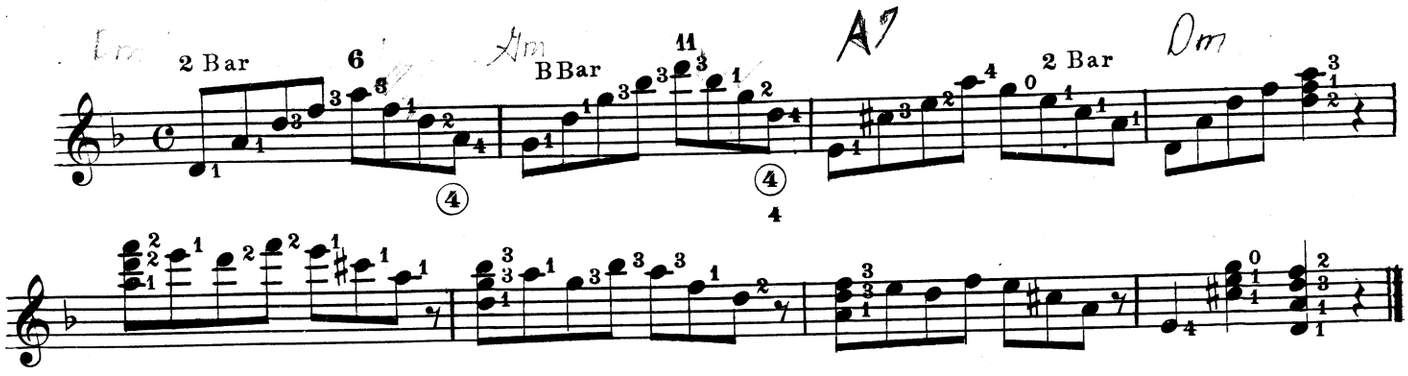
(RELATIVE TO F MAJOR)



D MINOR

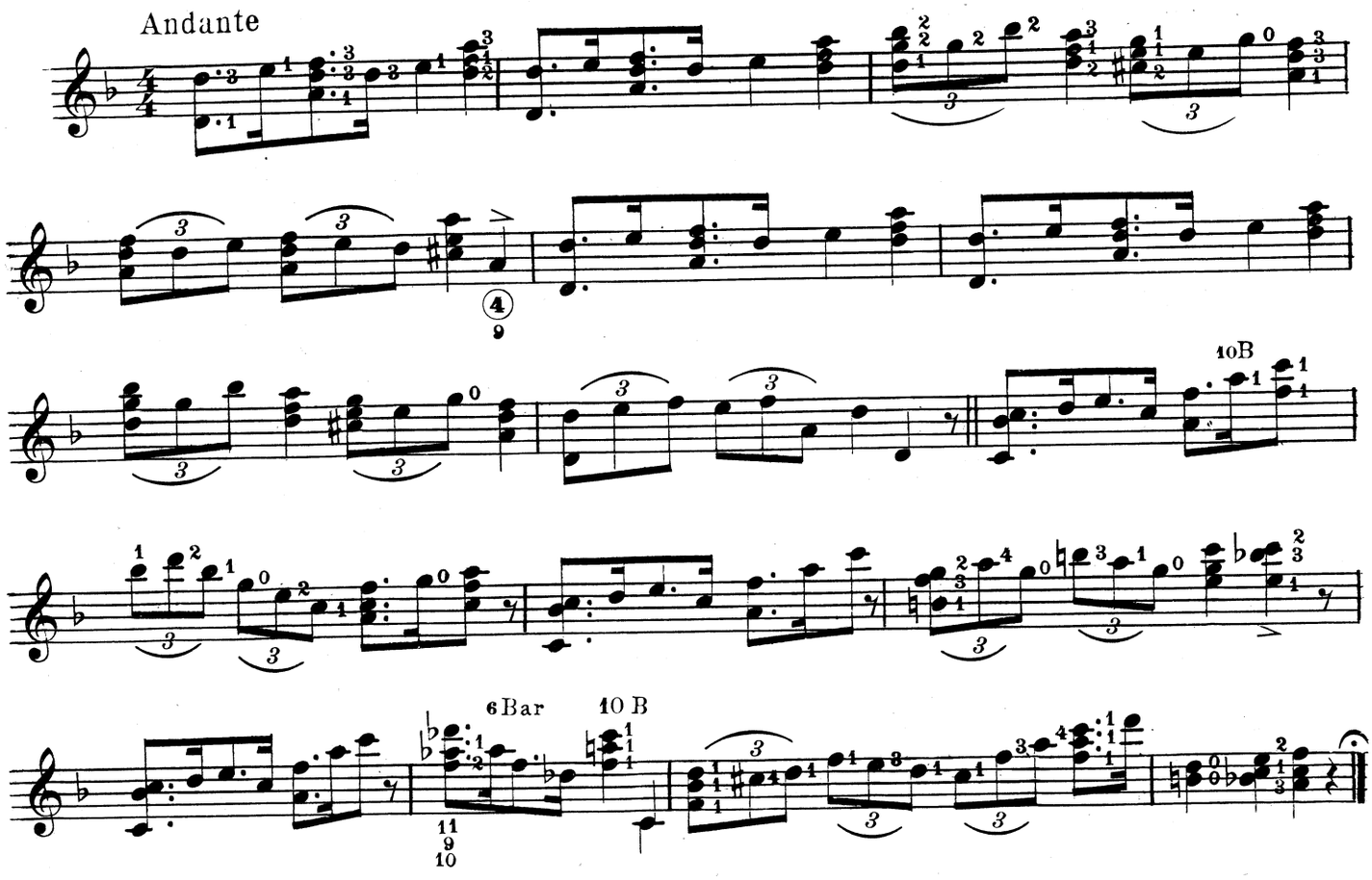


Exercise in D Minor

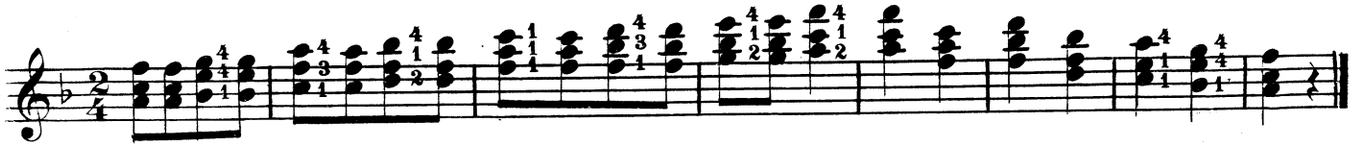


Dance of the Scarecrows

F. J. B.

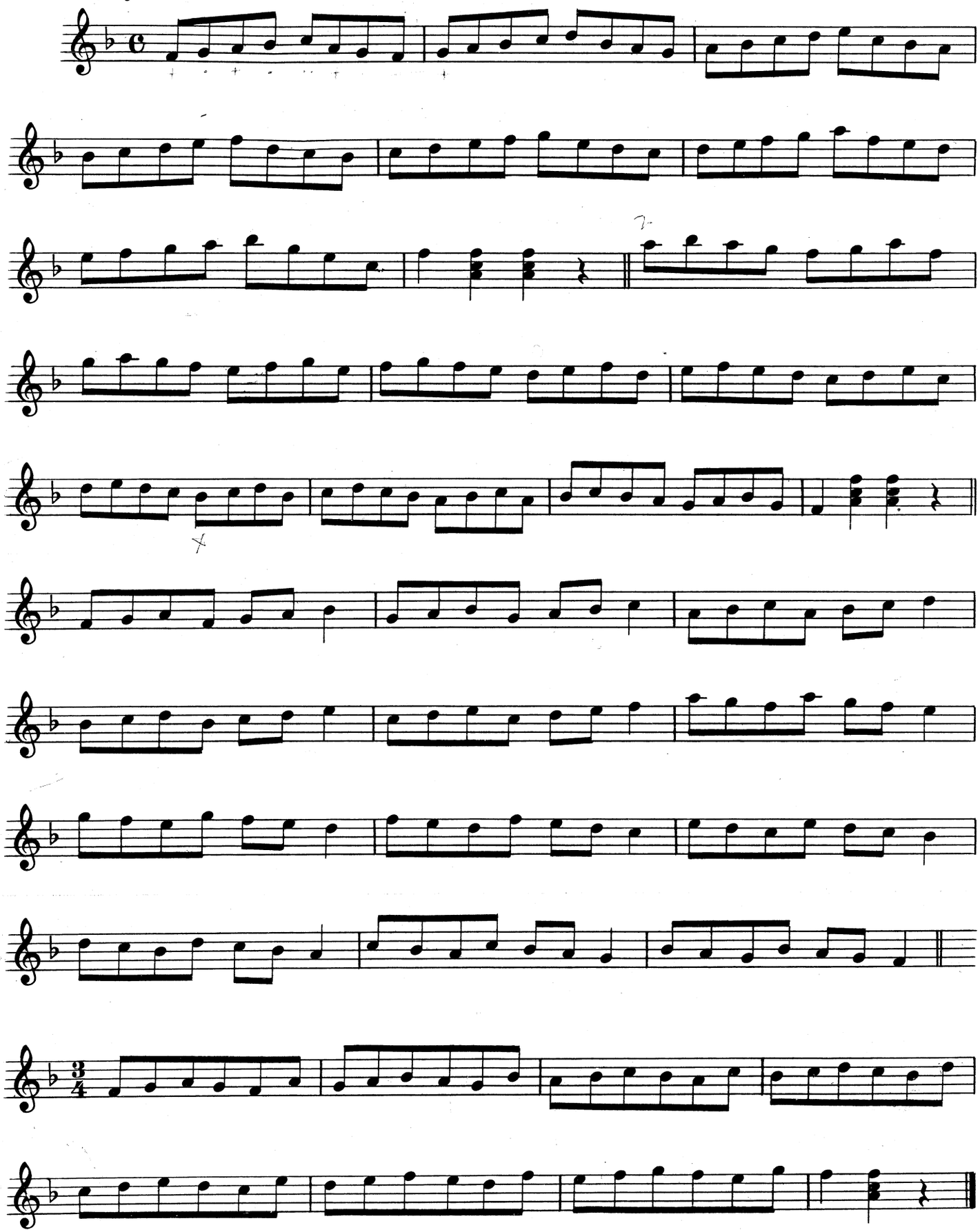


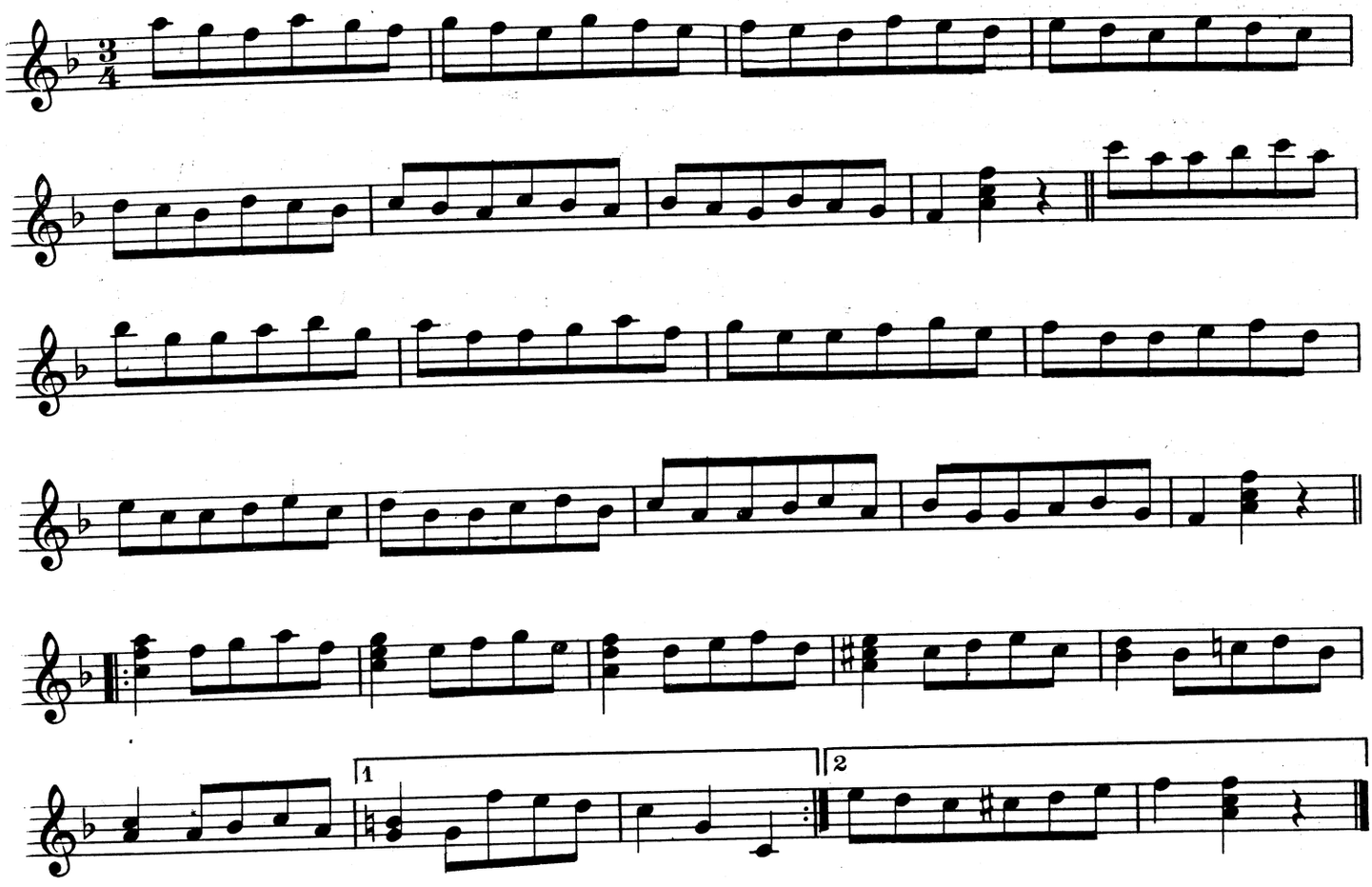
Chords in F Major



Etudes for Daily Practice

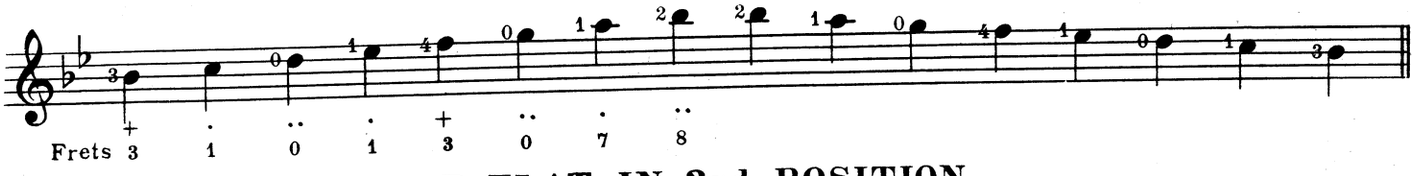
Key of F



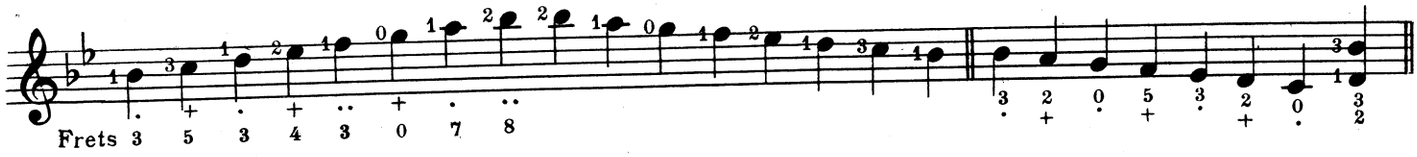


SCALE OF B FLAT MAJOR

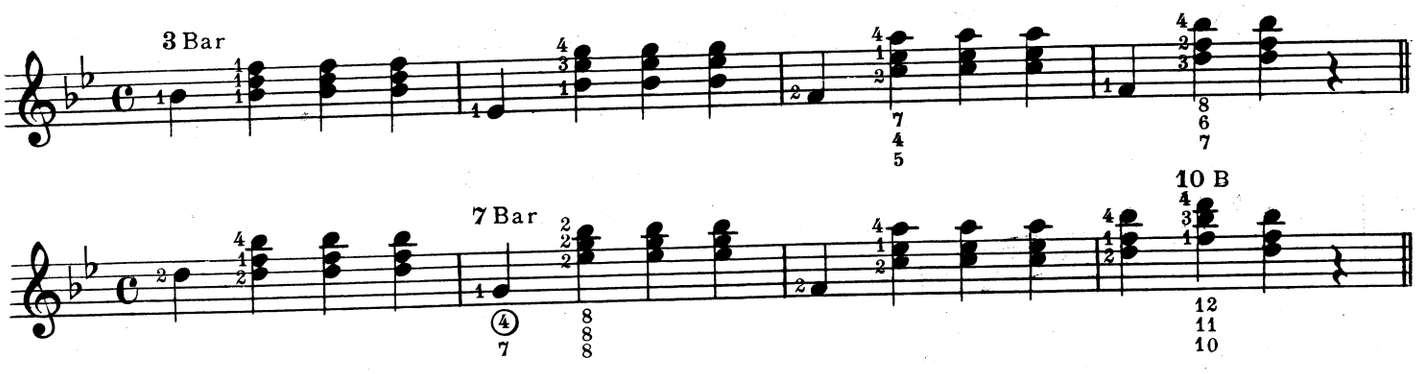
(B & E Flat)



B FLAT IN 3rd POSITION



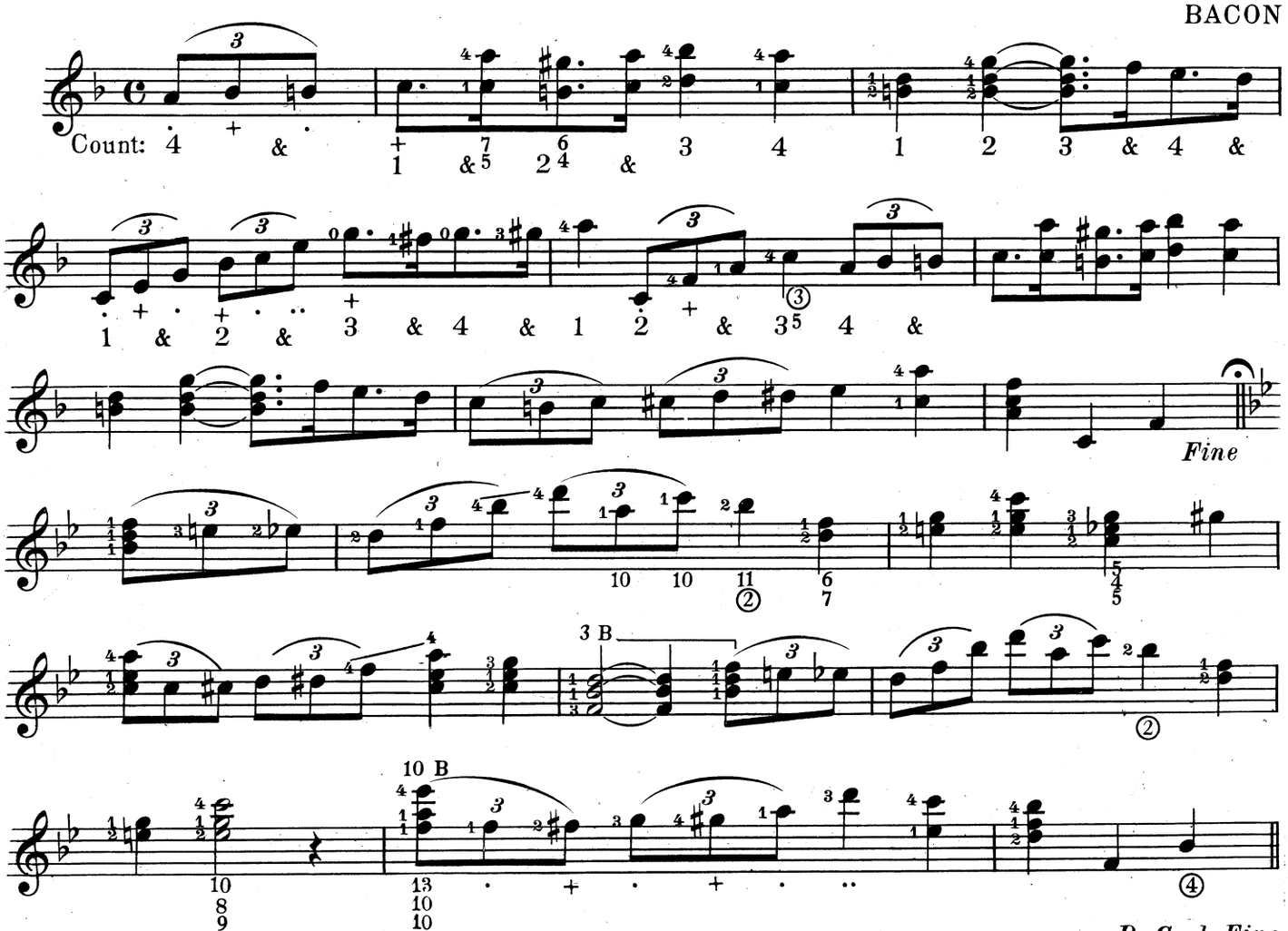
CHORDS IN B FLAT MAJOR



Pretty Brown Eyes

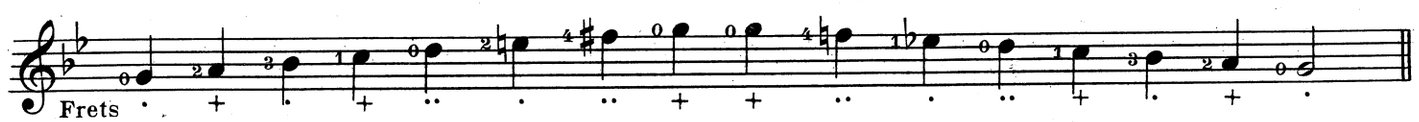
Schottische

BACON

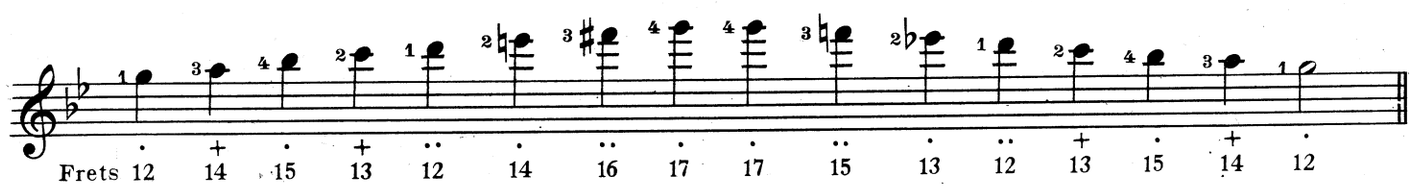


SCALE OF G MINOR

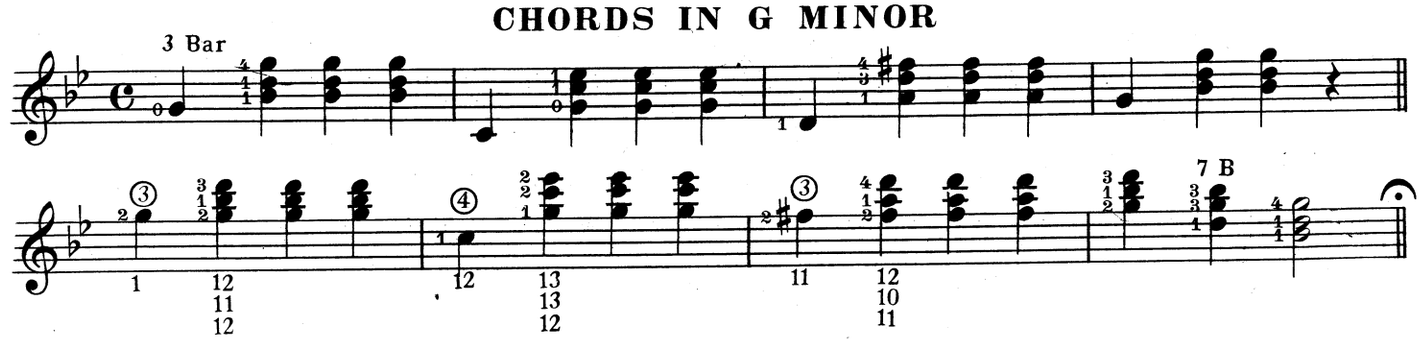
(RELATIVE TO B FLAT MAJOR)



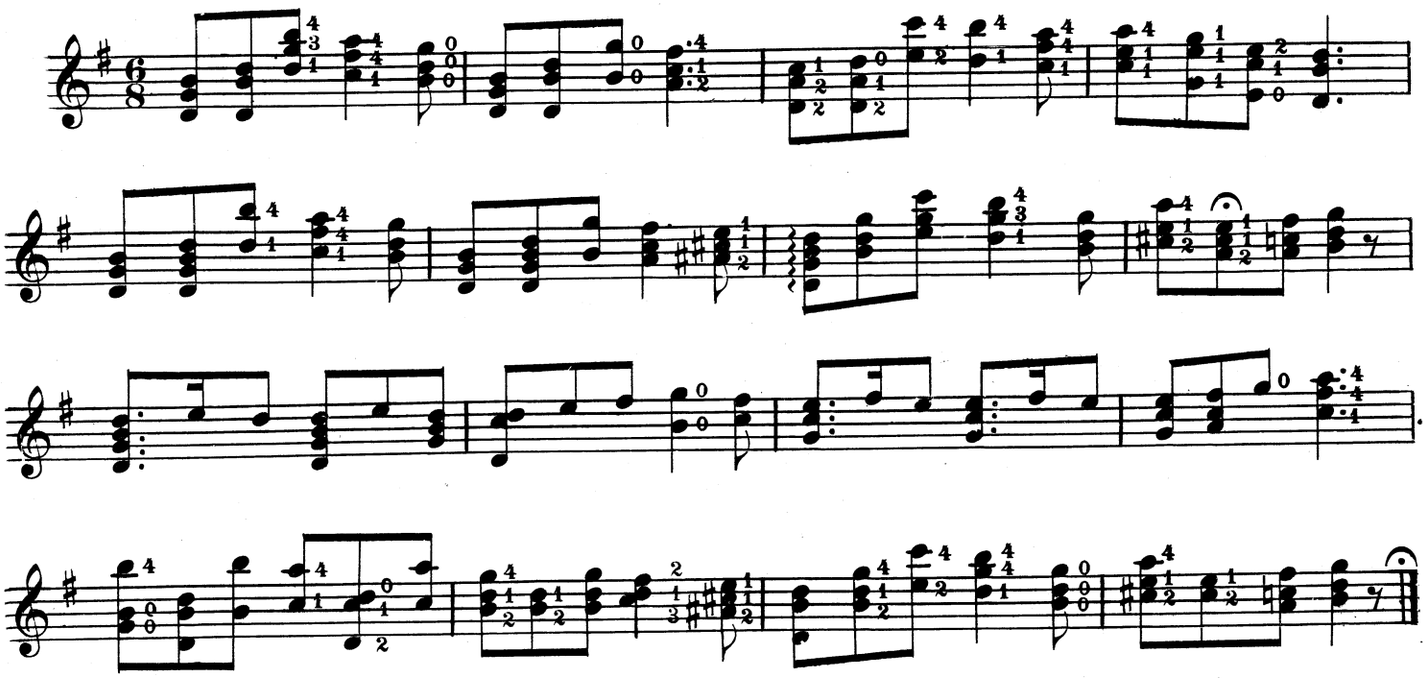
SCALE OF G MINOR (2nd Octave)



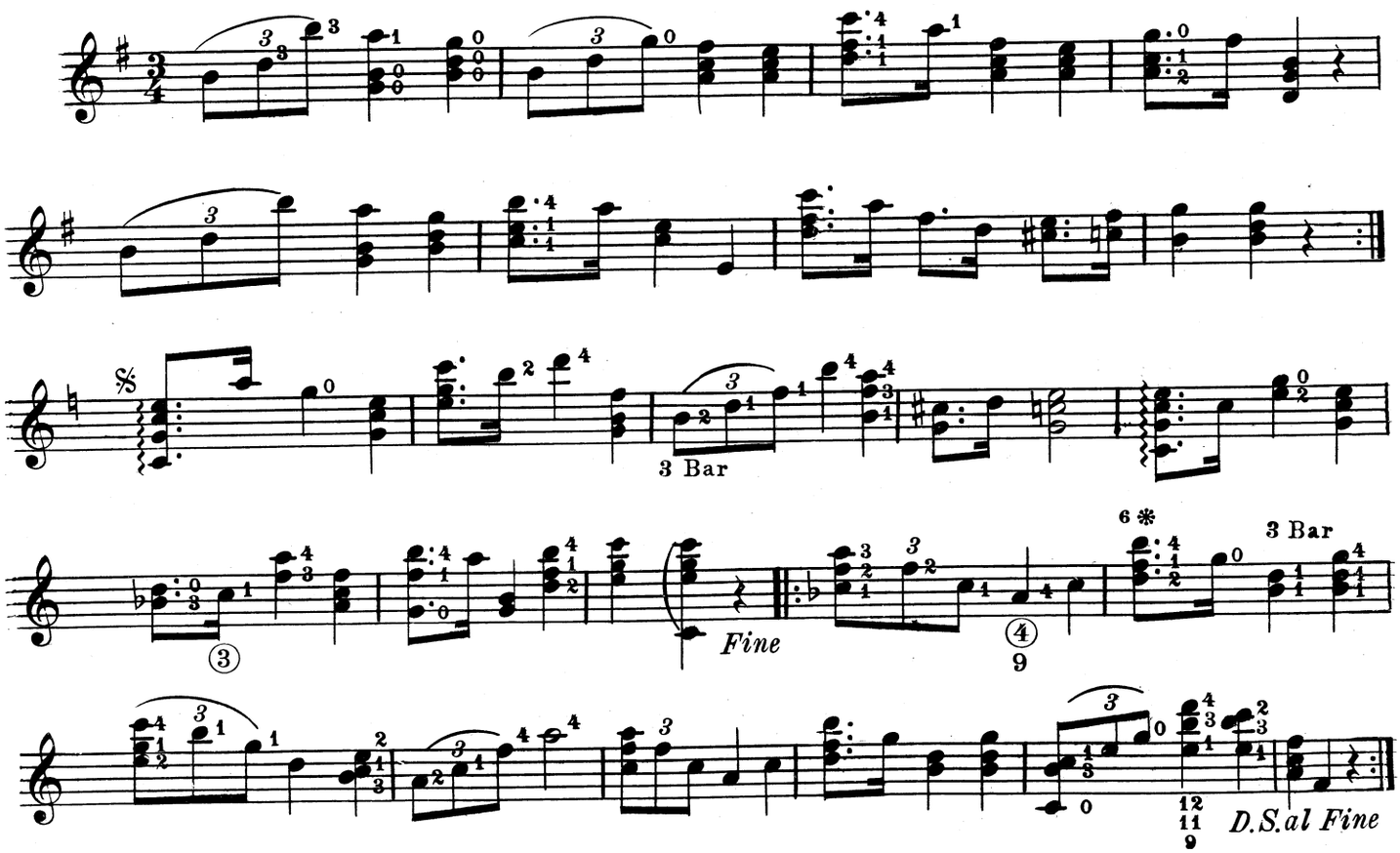
CHORDS IN G MINOR



Emmetts Lullaby

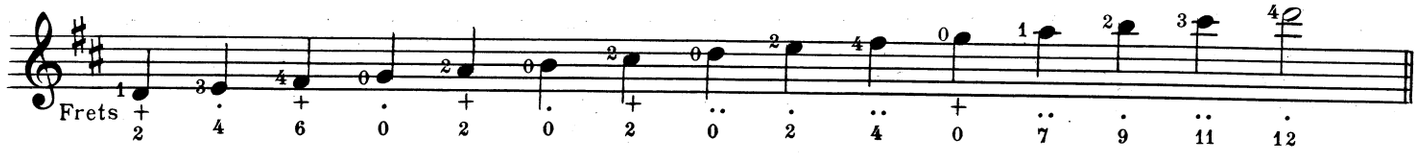


Moonlight Mazurka

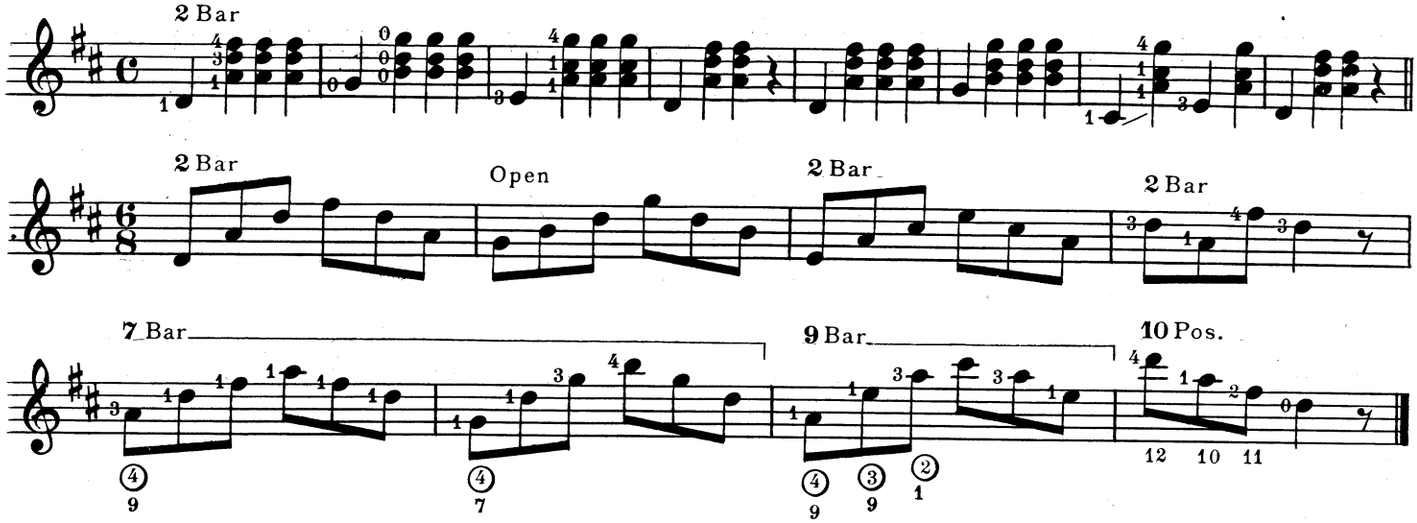


SCALE OF D MAJOR

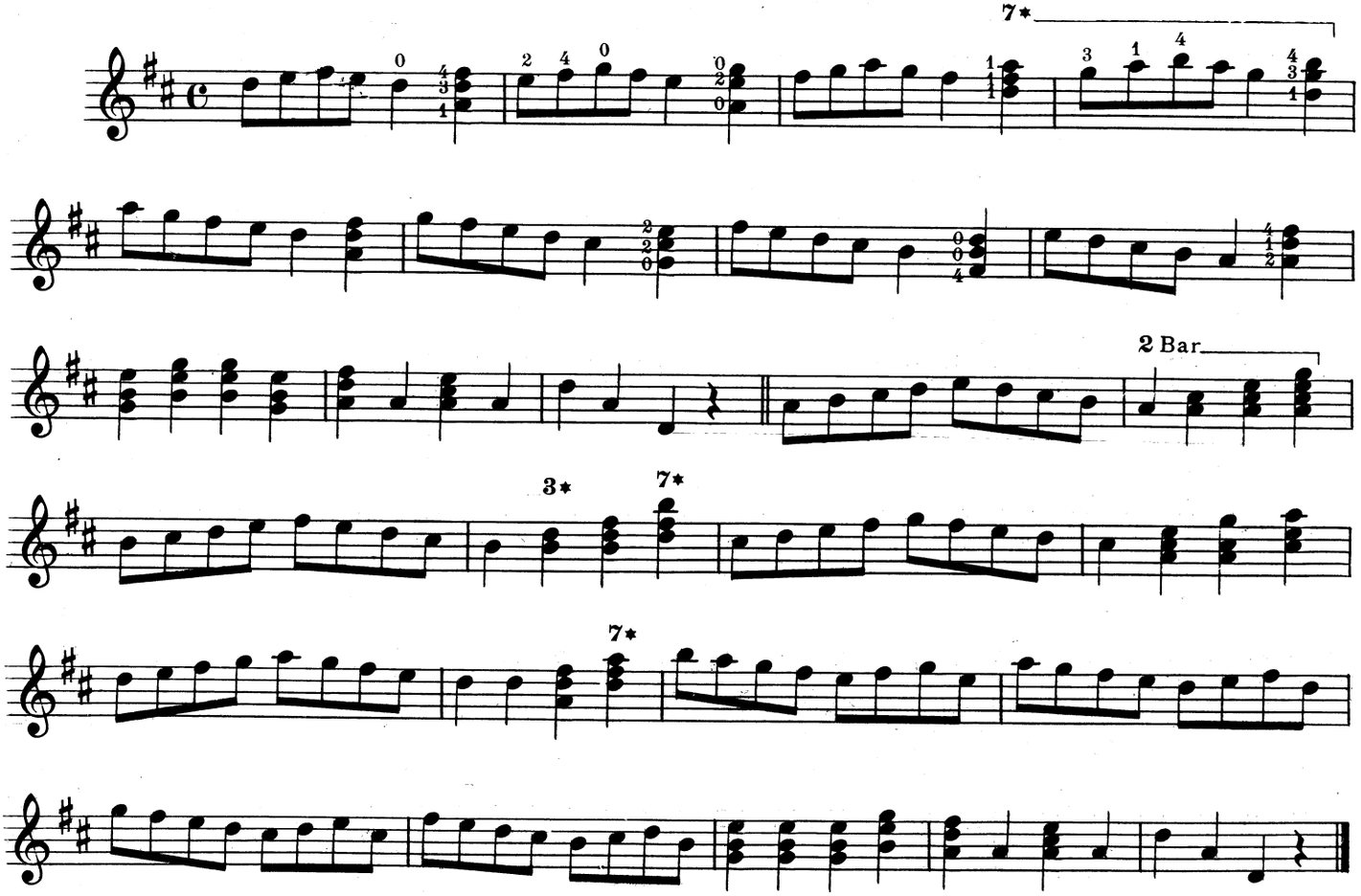
(F & C Sharp)



CHORDS IN D MAJOR

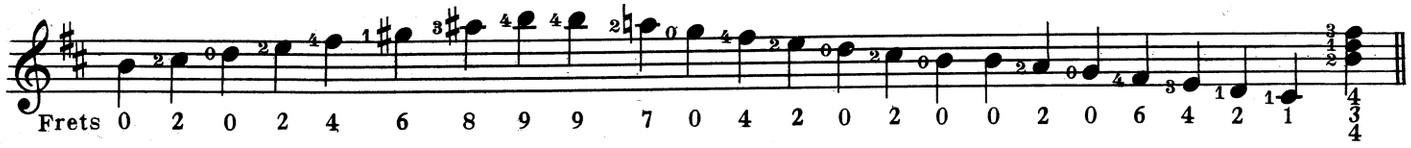


Etude in D Major

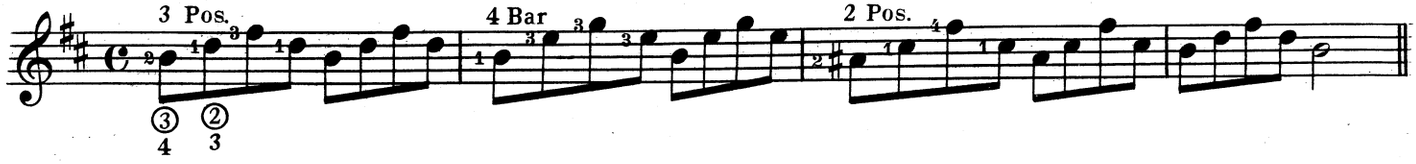


SCALE OF B MINOR

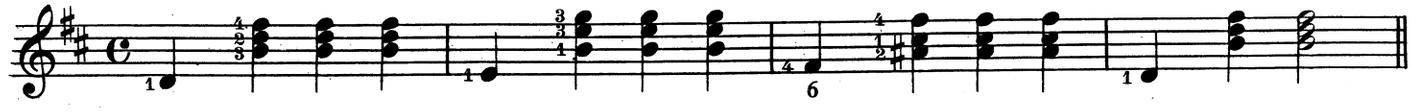
(RELATIVE TO D MAJOR)



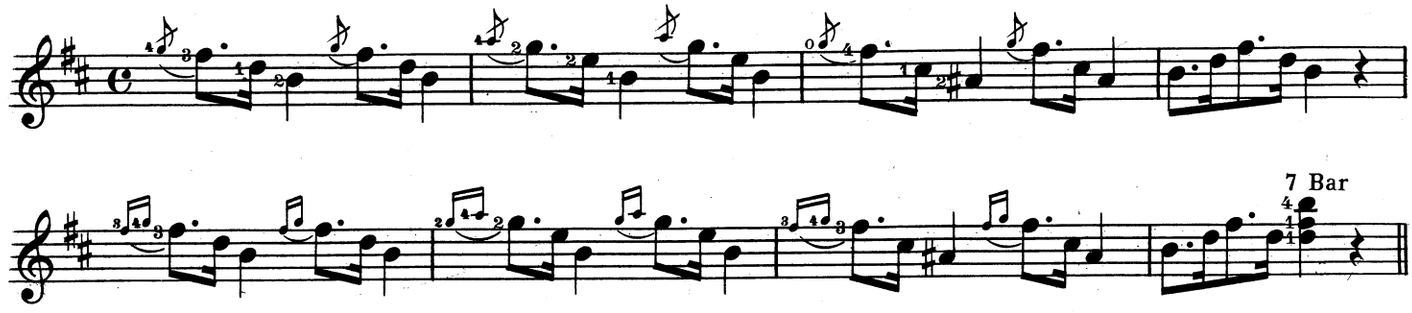
EXERCISE IN B MINOR



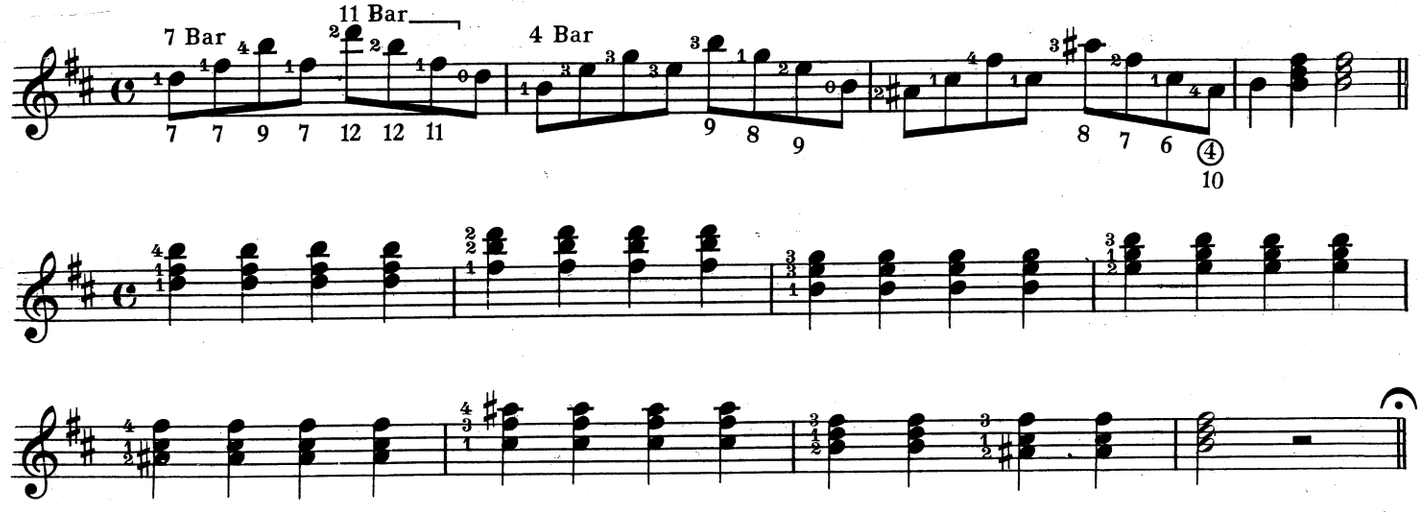
CHORDS IN B MINOR



EXERCISE USING GRACE NOTES, SINGLE AND DOUBLE

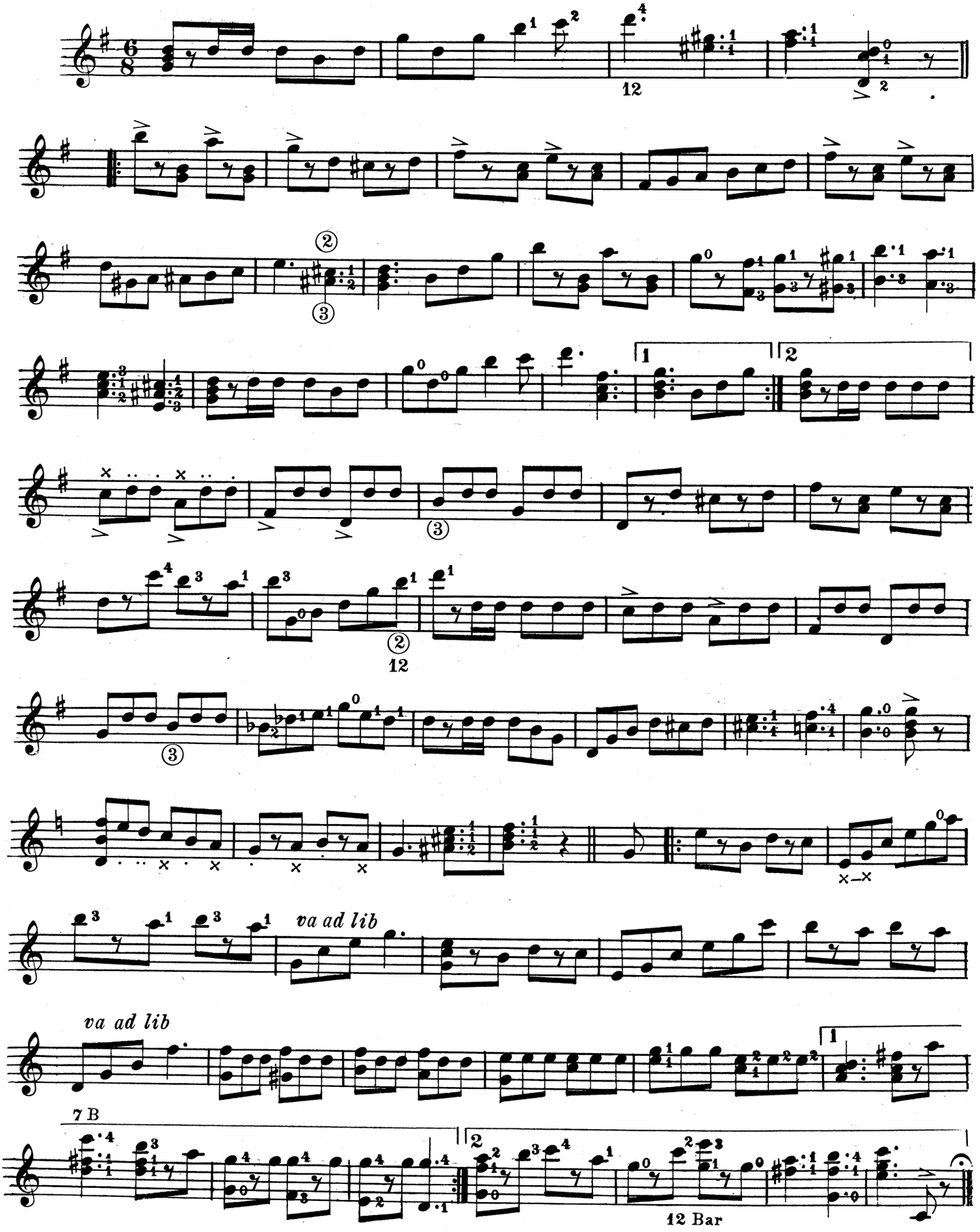


EXERCISE IN B MINOR IN POSITIONS

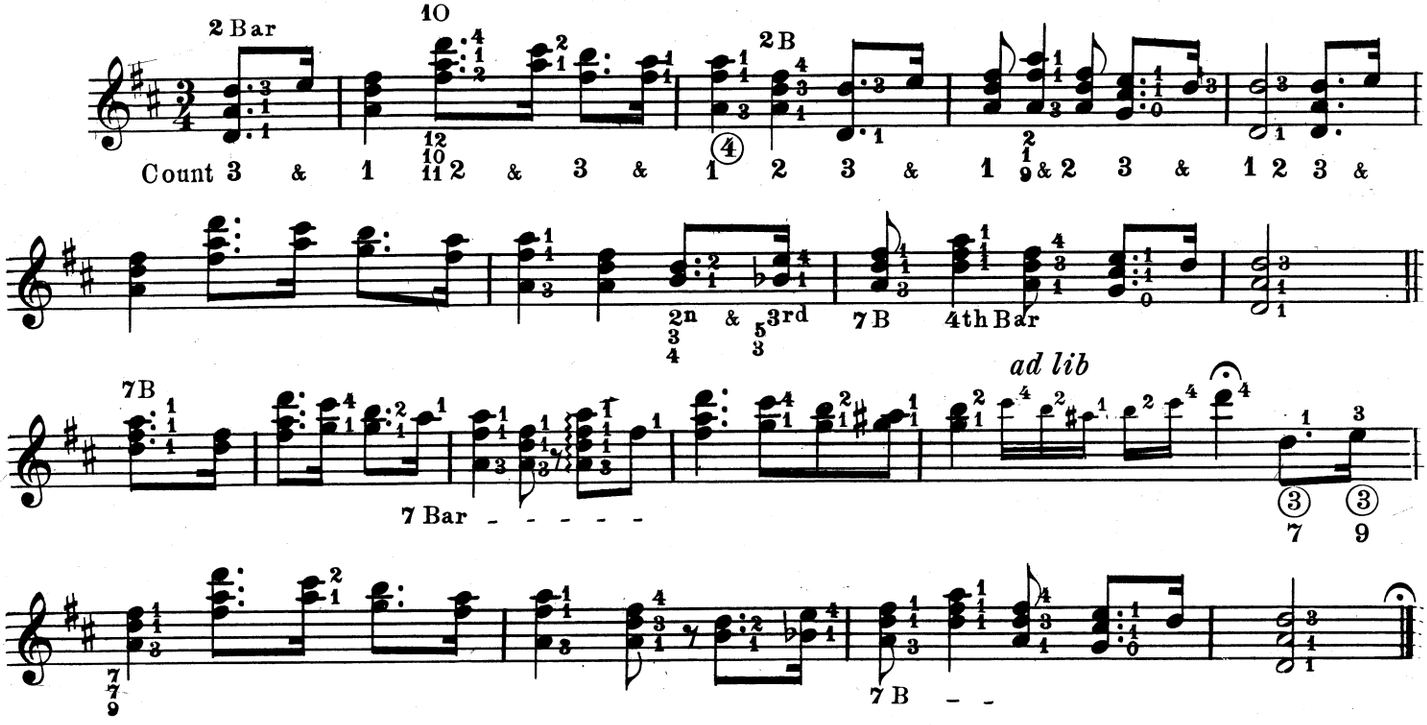


March Of The Marines

BACON

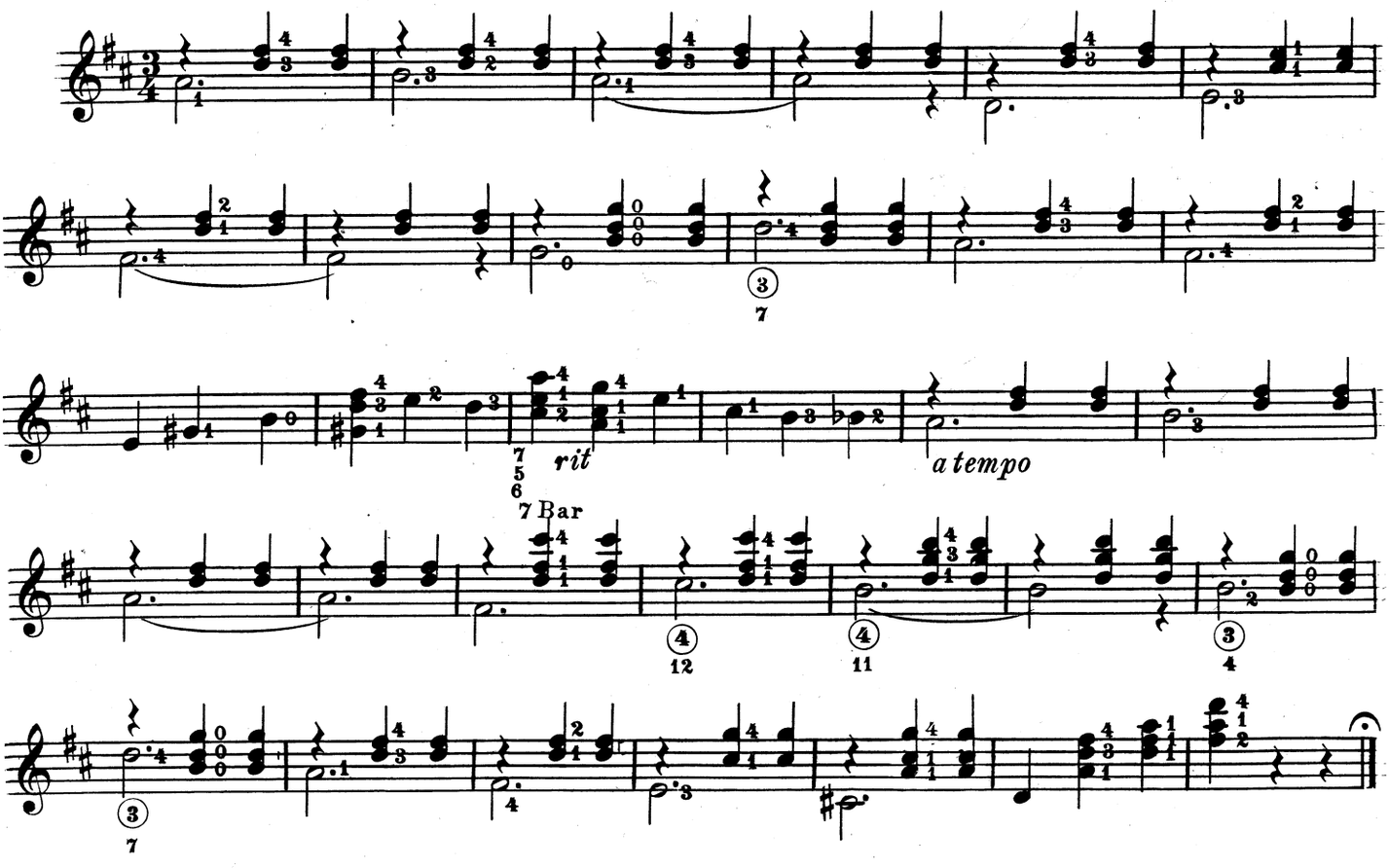


The Last Rose of Summer

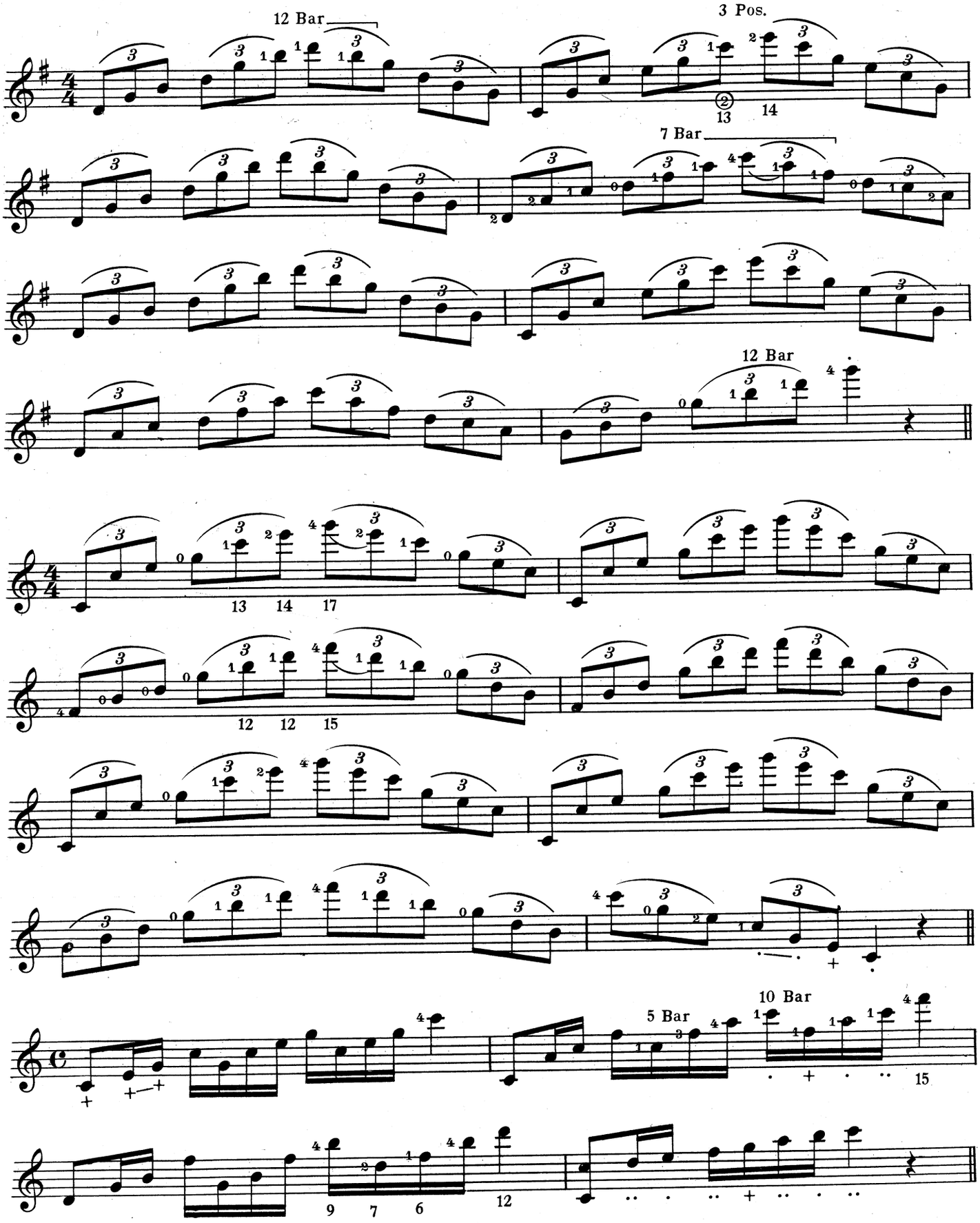


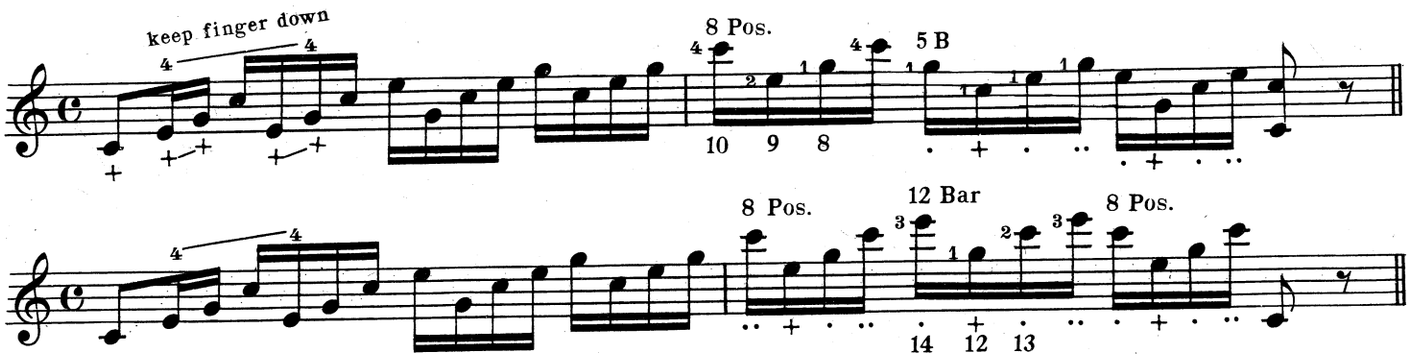
Waltz Impromtu

F. J. B.



GOOD RIGHT AND LEFT HAND PRACTICE

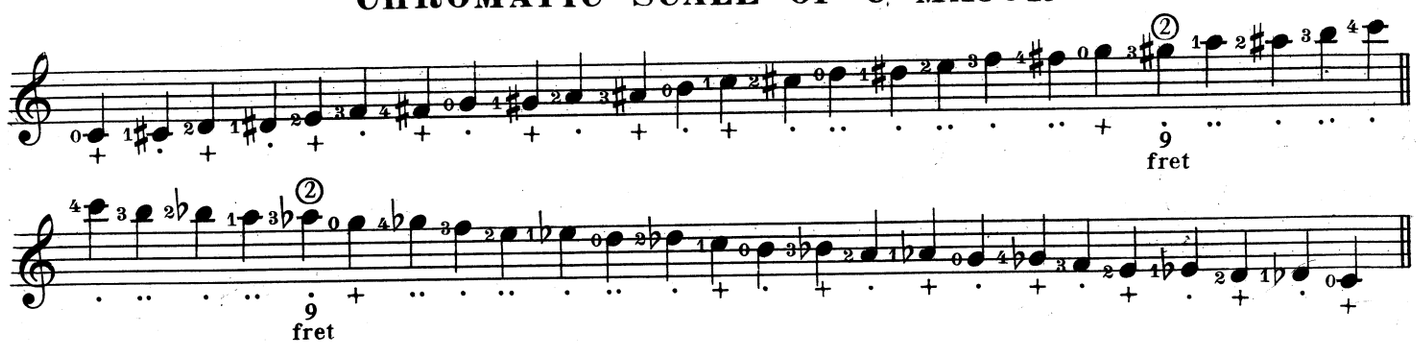




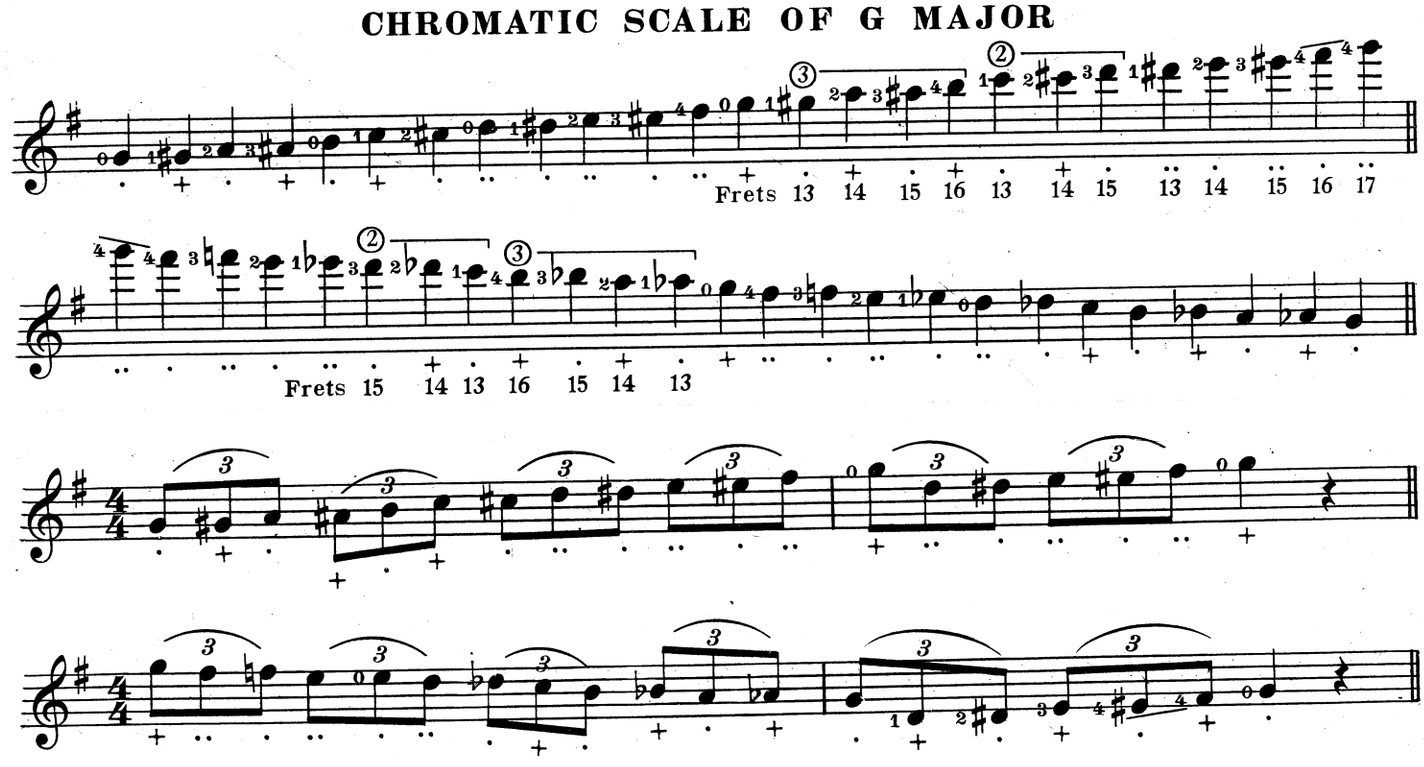
The scales which you have thus far learned have been either *major* or *minor*, and consisted of a series of whole tones and half tones. These are called *diatonic* scales.

We will now take up the study of the *Chromatic* scale, which is a successesion of ***half tones only***. Sharps and double sharps are used in the *ascending* scale, and flats and naturals in the *descending* scale.

CHROMATIC SCALE OF C MAJOR

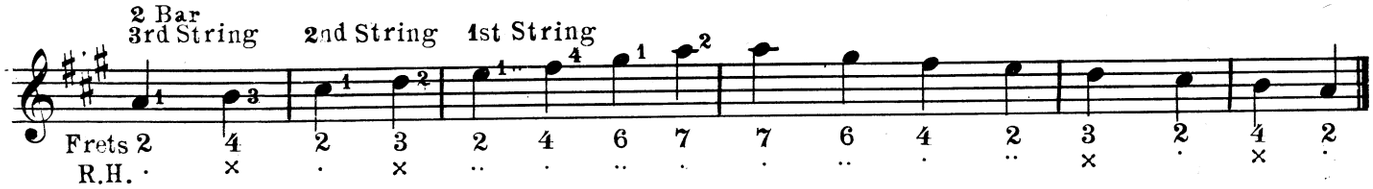


CHROMATIC SCALE OF G MAJOR

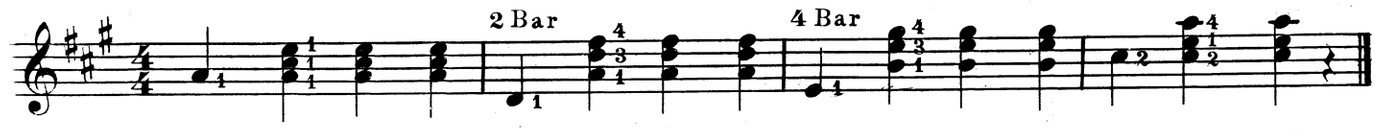


Practice the above slowly and be *sure* and use the fingering of both hands *exactly* as written. Then gradually work up speed.— There is nothing better for right and left hand technique than chromatic scale practice.

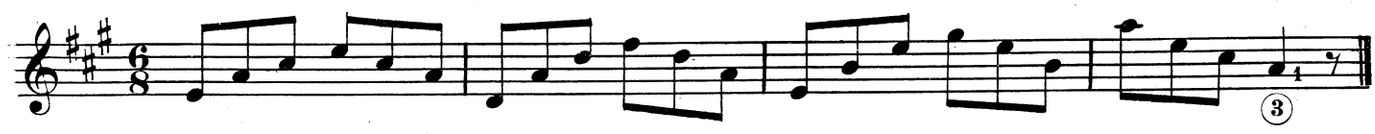
Scale of A Major



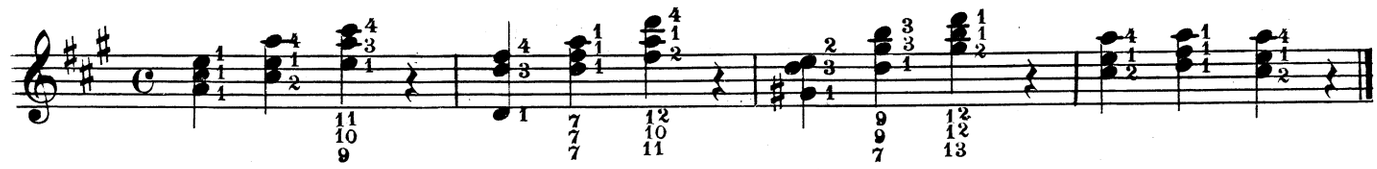
Chords in A Major



Exercise in A Major

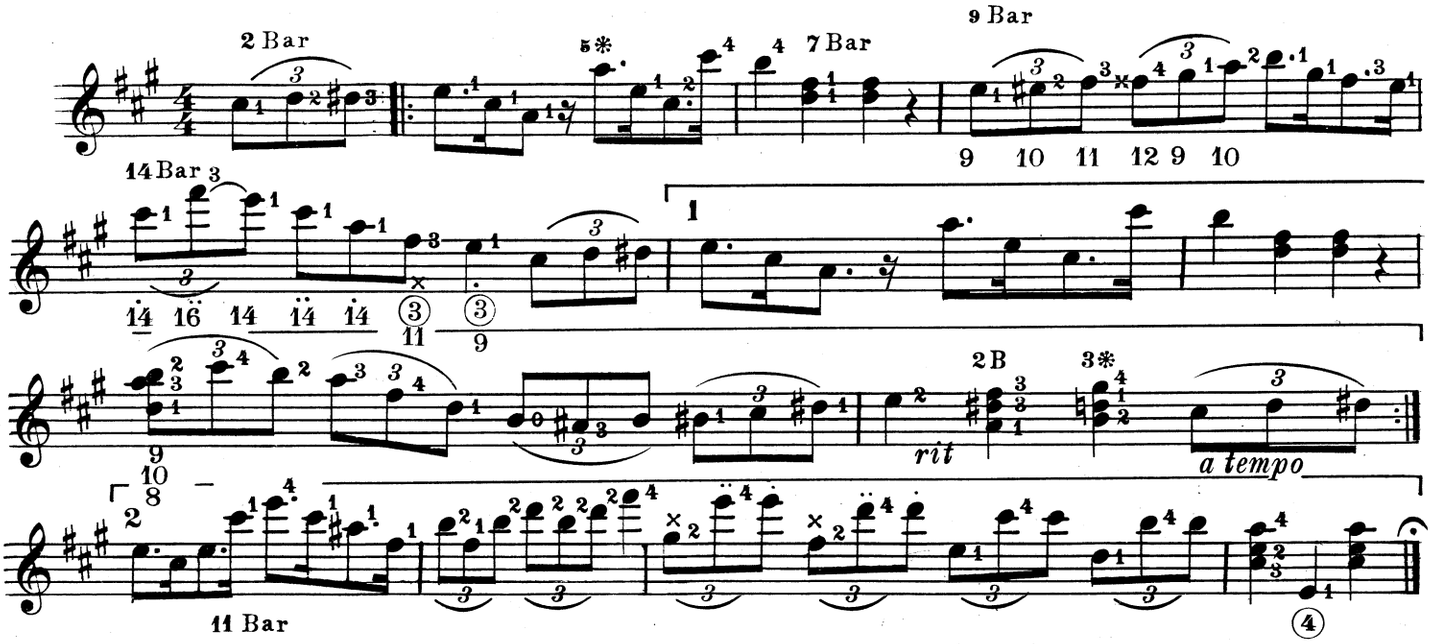


More chords in A Major

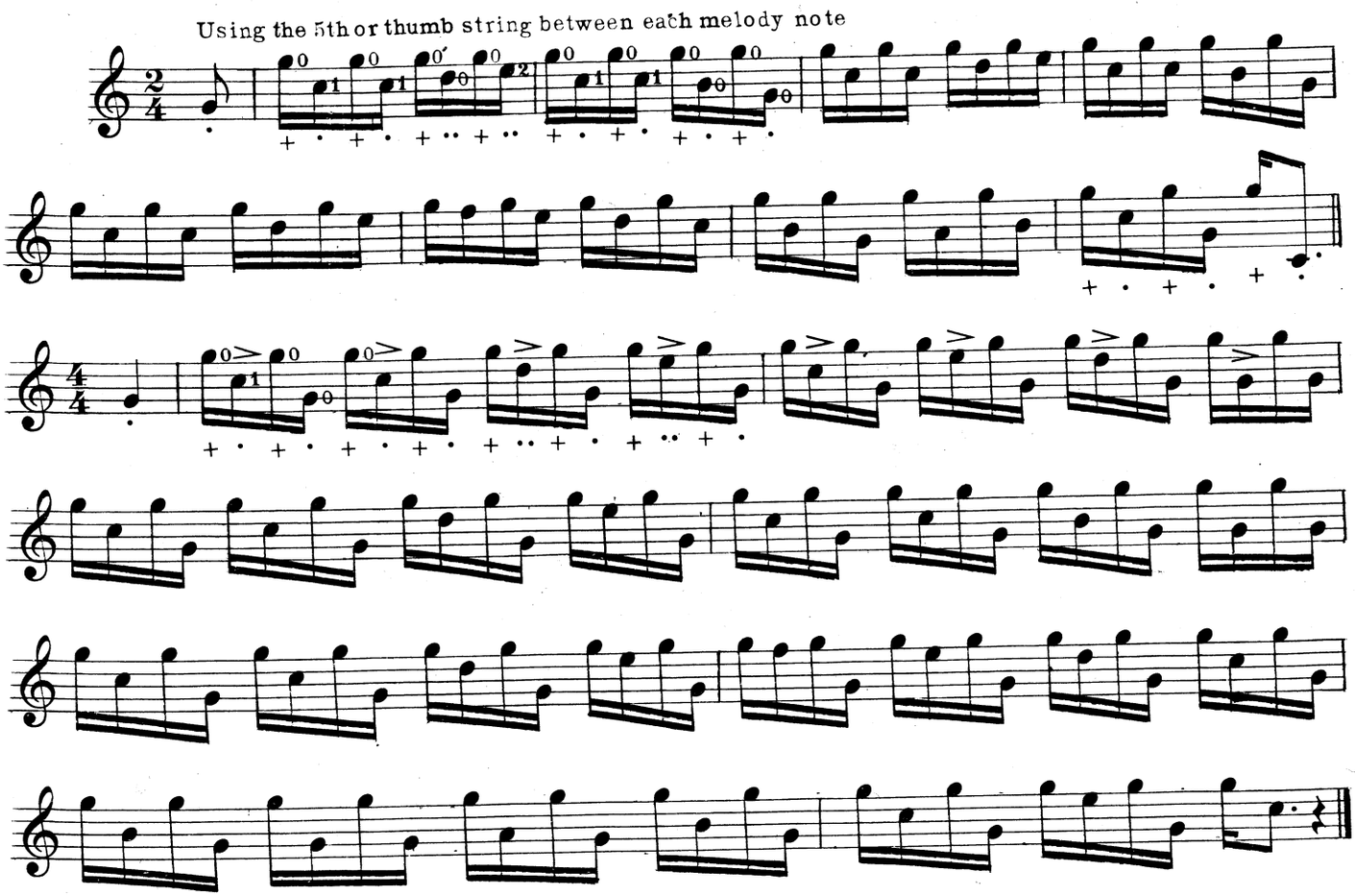


Dance of the Fairies

BACON

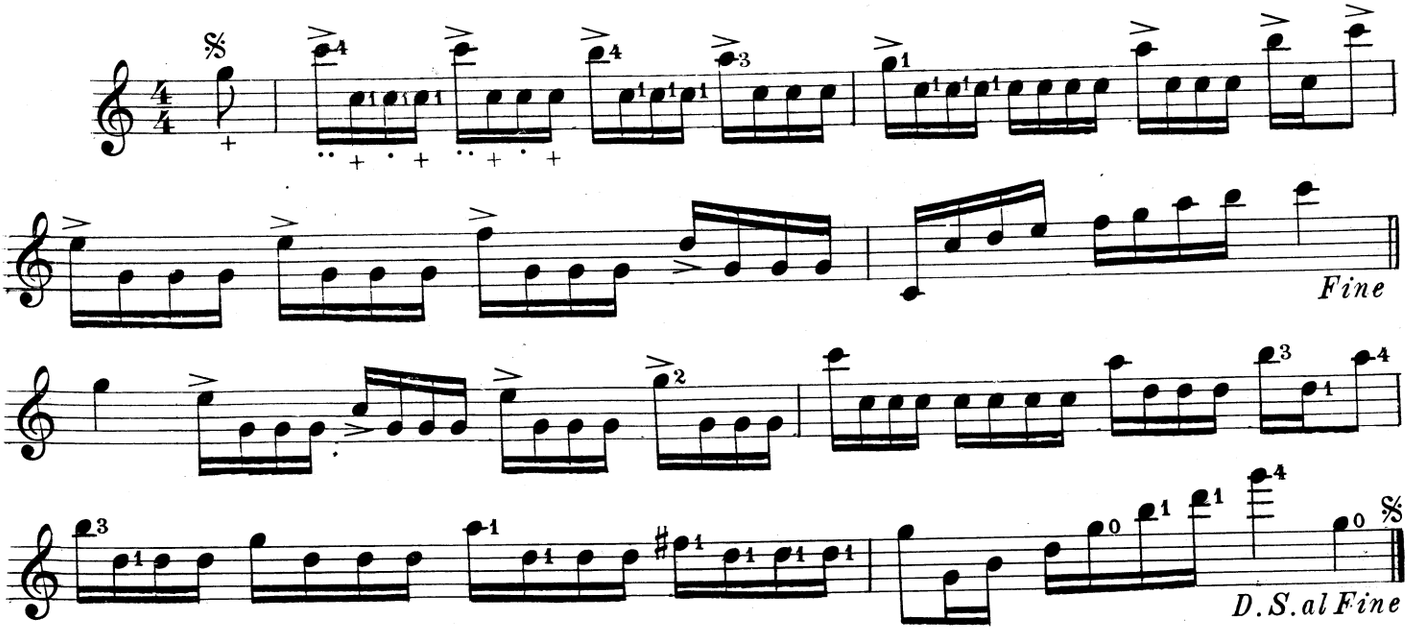


Yankee Doodle

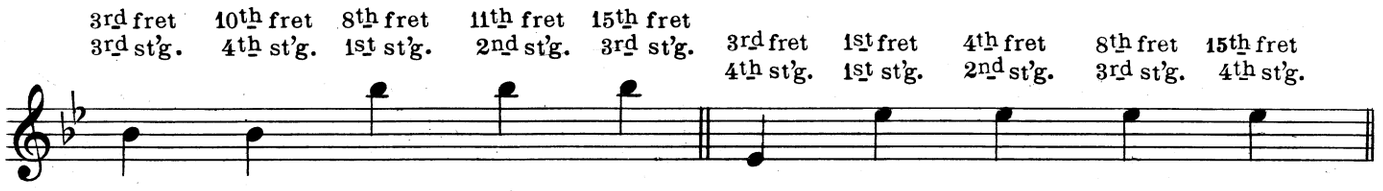


Blue Bells of Scotland

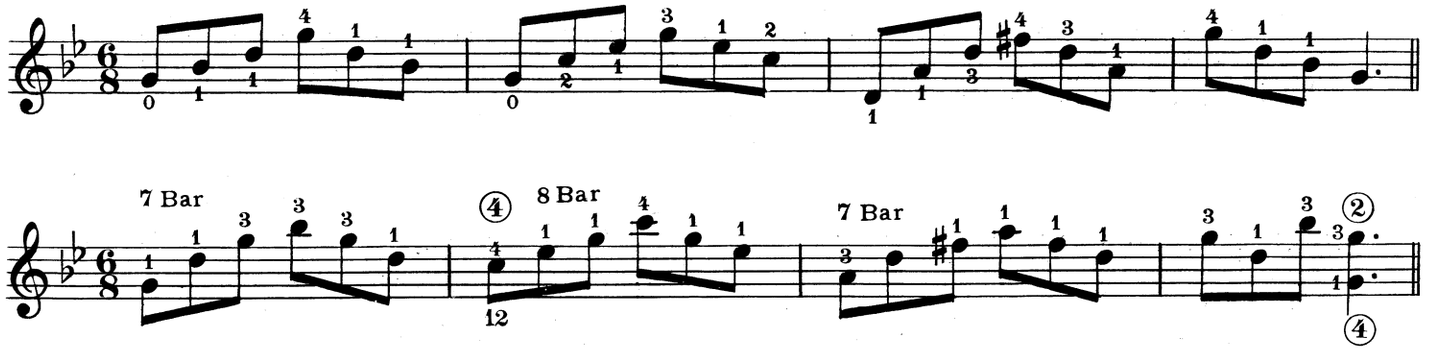
(Variation)



Memorize where all B and E flats are played on the different strings

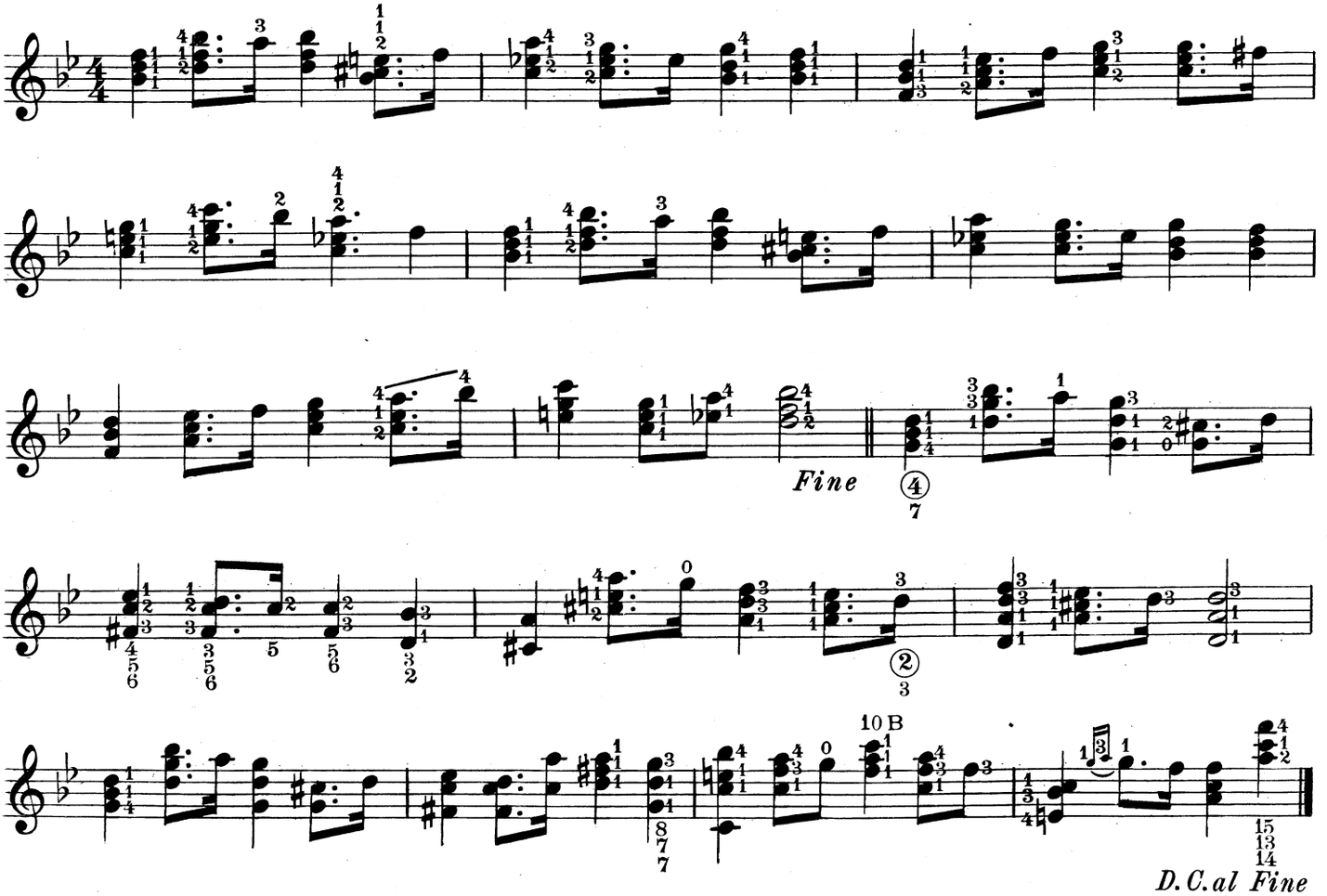


Exercise in G Minor

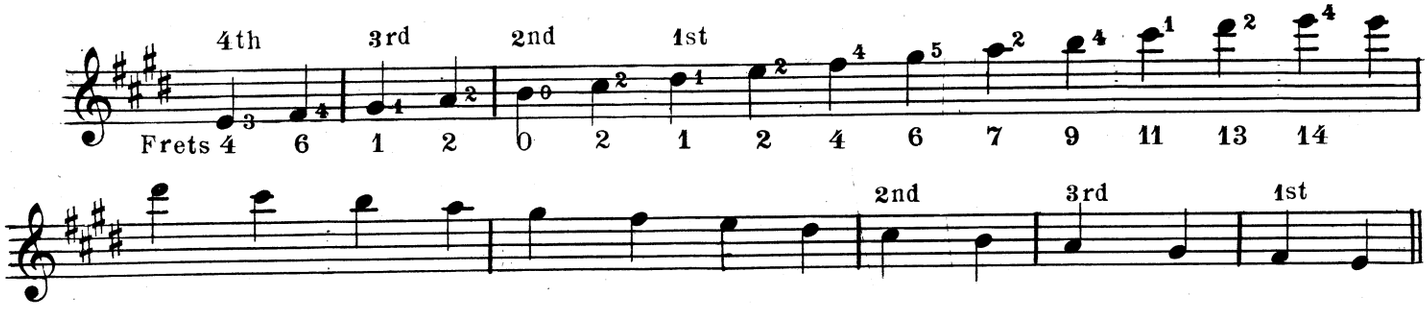


Come Back To Erin

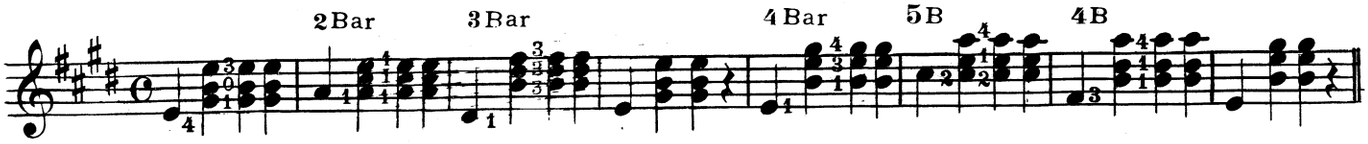
First Strain is in B flat Major
and the 2nd Strain G Minor, and D Minor



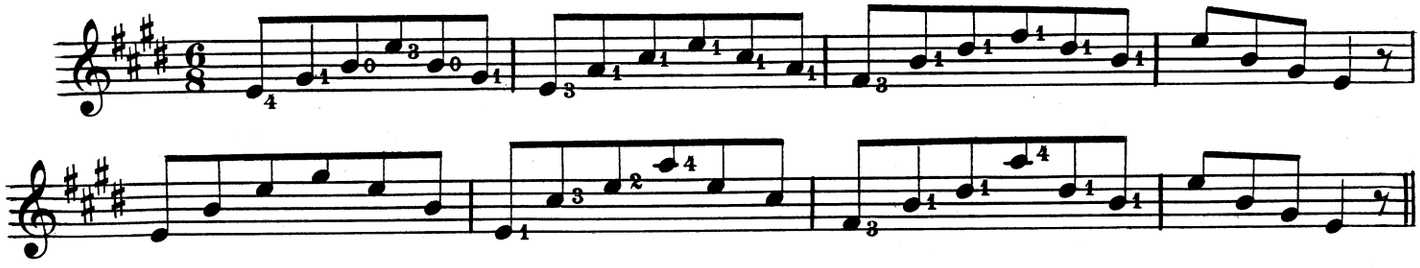
Scale of E Major F C.G.& D.sharp



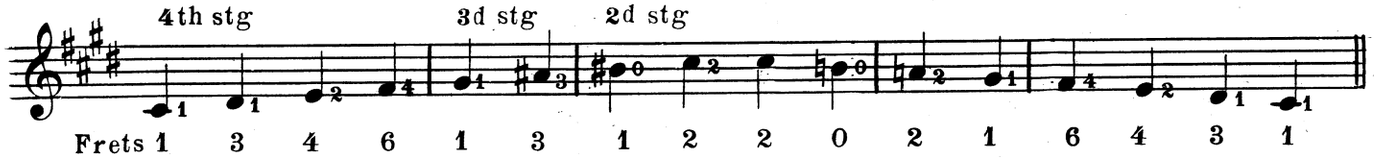
Simple Chords in E Major



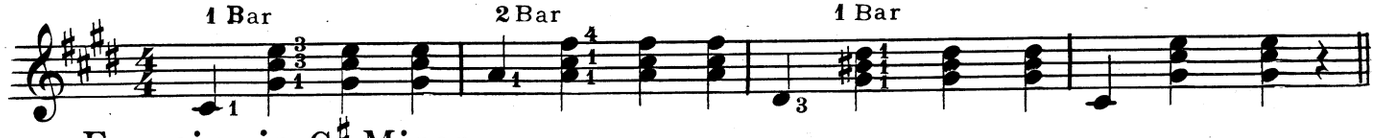
Exercise in E Major



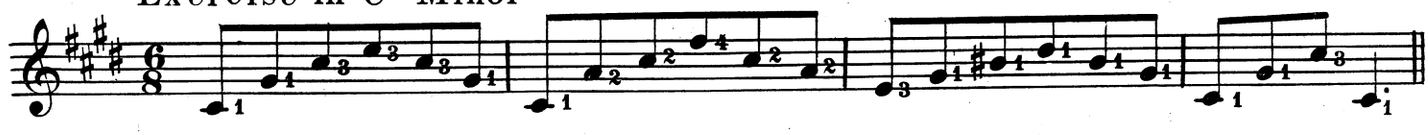
Scale of C♯ Minor (Relative to E Major)



Simple Chords in C♯ Minor



Exercise in C♯ Minor

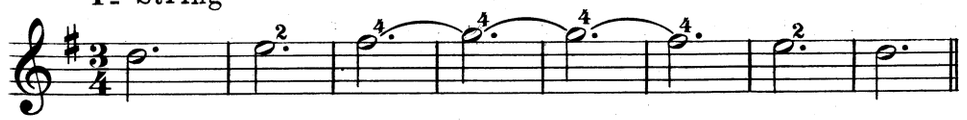


We are now ready to take up the *Tremolo,* one of the most beautiful effects obtained on the Banjo. Rest the third finger of the right hand on the head of the banjo about three to three and one half inches from the bridge. The second finger can also rest on the head of the banjo, but the fourth finger must not, as this would not allow as free a swing of the first finger which is the one used in making the tremolo. The first finger swings rapidly back and forth, across the string or strings, causing a continuous trill.

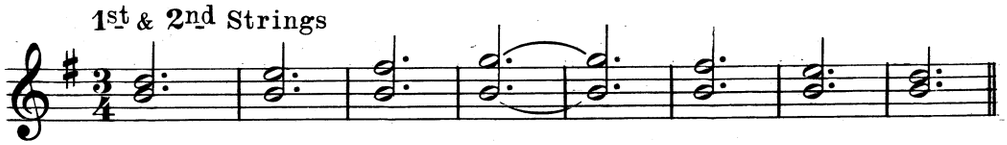
Sustained notes are played this way, and a great many melodies can be played tremolo, and at the same time the thumb of the right hand can pick the accompaniment.

Swing the first finger from the second joint, as rapidly as possible, allowing only the tip end of the finger to touch the string. Keep the thumb down (See Illustration.) Notes that are to be played tremolo are sometimes written ♯ or abbreviated *trem.* When the thumb is to be used along with the tremolo, the notes are written with the stems down, and the notes that are to be played tremolo are written with stems up.

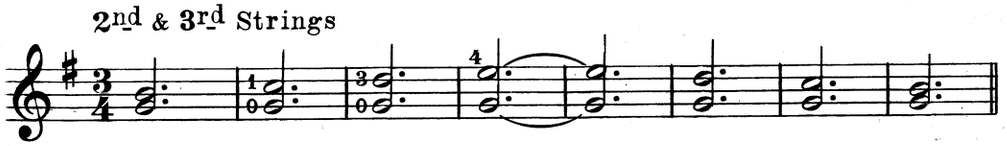
1st String



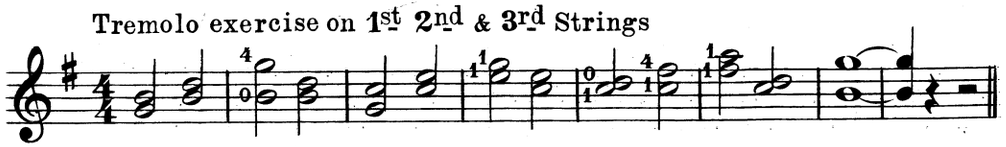
1st & 2nd Strings



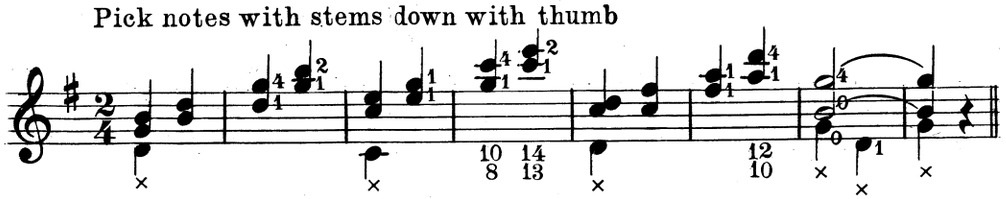
2nd & 3rd Strings



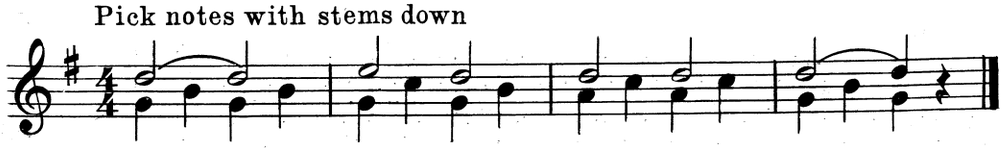
Tremolo exercise on 1st 2nd & 3rd Strings



Pick notes with stems down with thumb

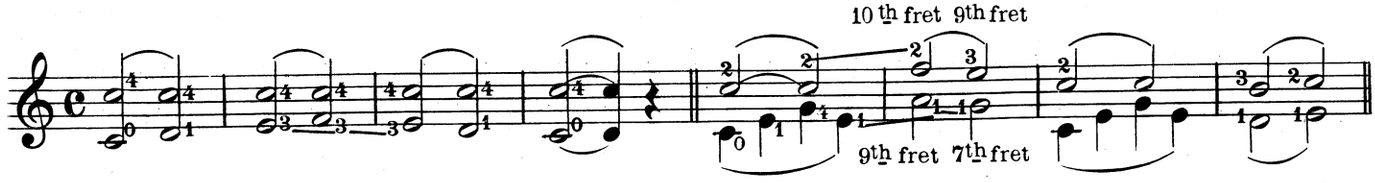


Pick notes with stems down



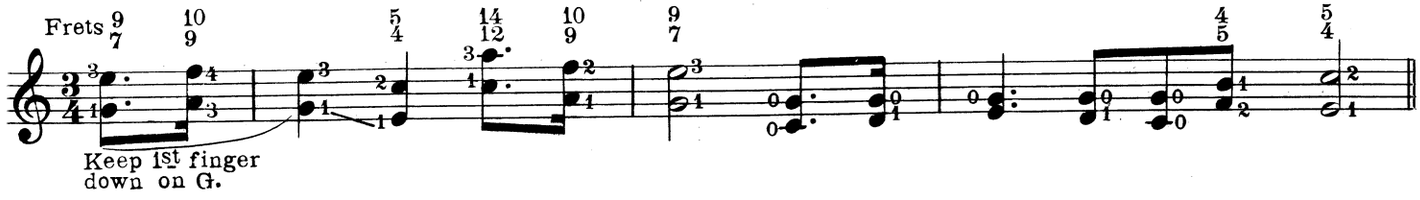
When playing the tremolo on the third and fourth strings the right hand can be drawn over far enough so that the first finger can swing freely back and forth on the strings. The second and third fingers can even rest lightly on the first and second strings, instead of on the head of the banjo, if you find it is easier to tremolo the third and fourth strings this way. When there is one note with the stem up, and two or more notes with stems turned down in a measure, and slurred above and below, this means that both the upper and lower notes are tremoloed together, the upper note being held throughout the measure. In order to tremolo loud on the inside strings (second third and fourth) the first finger, is slightly tipped towards the bridge and a trifle lower on the string, instead of using the tip of the finger. This takes considerable force to make the finger tremolo fast which is very necessary.

Tremolo 3rd and 4th Strings



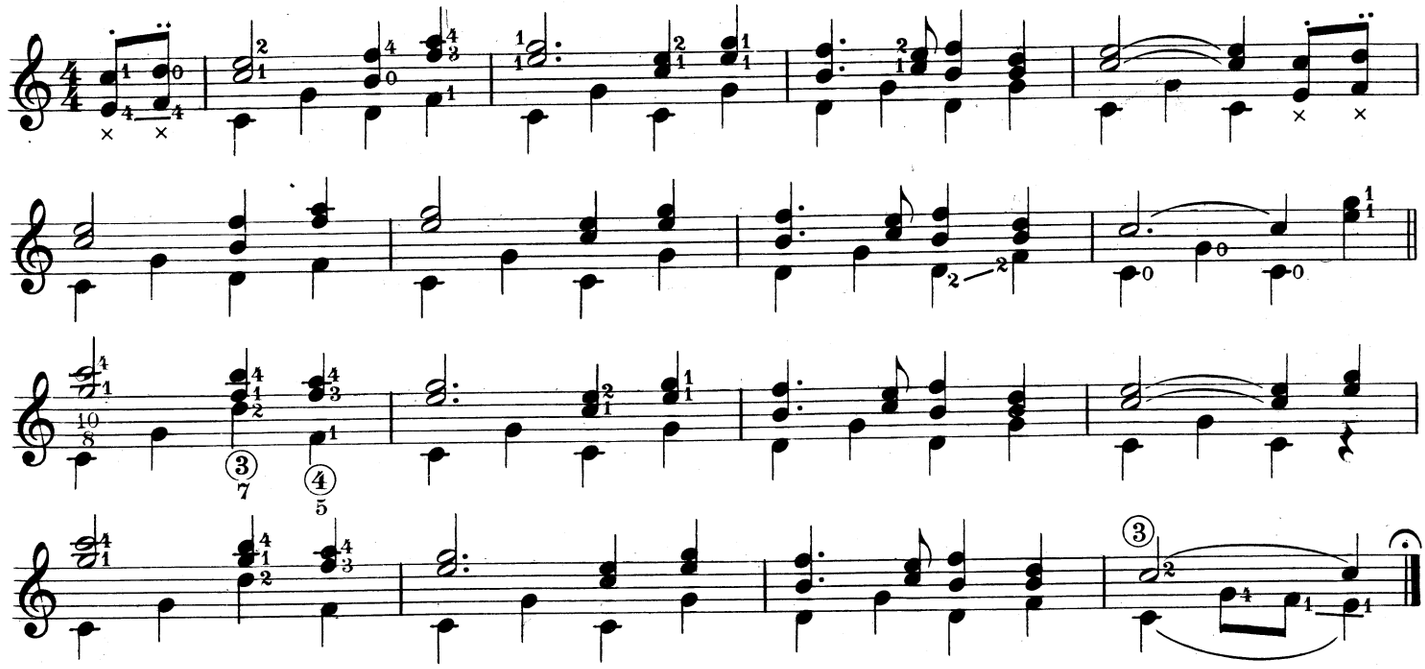
Rock of Ages

3rd and 4th Strings Tremolo

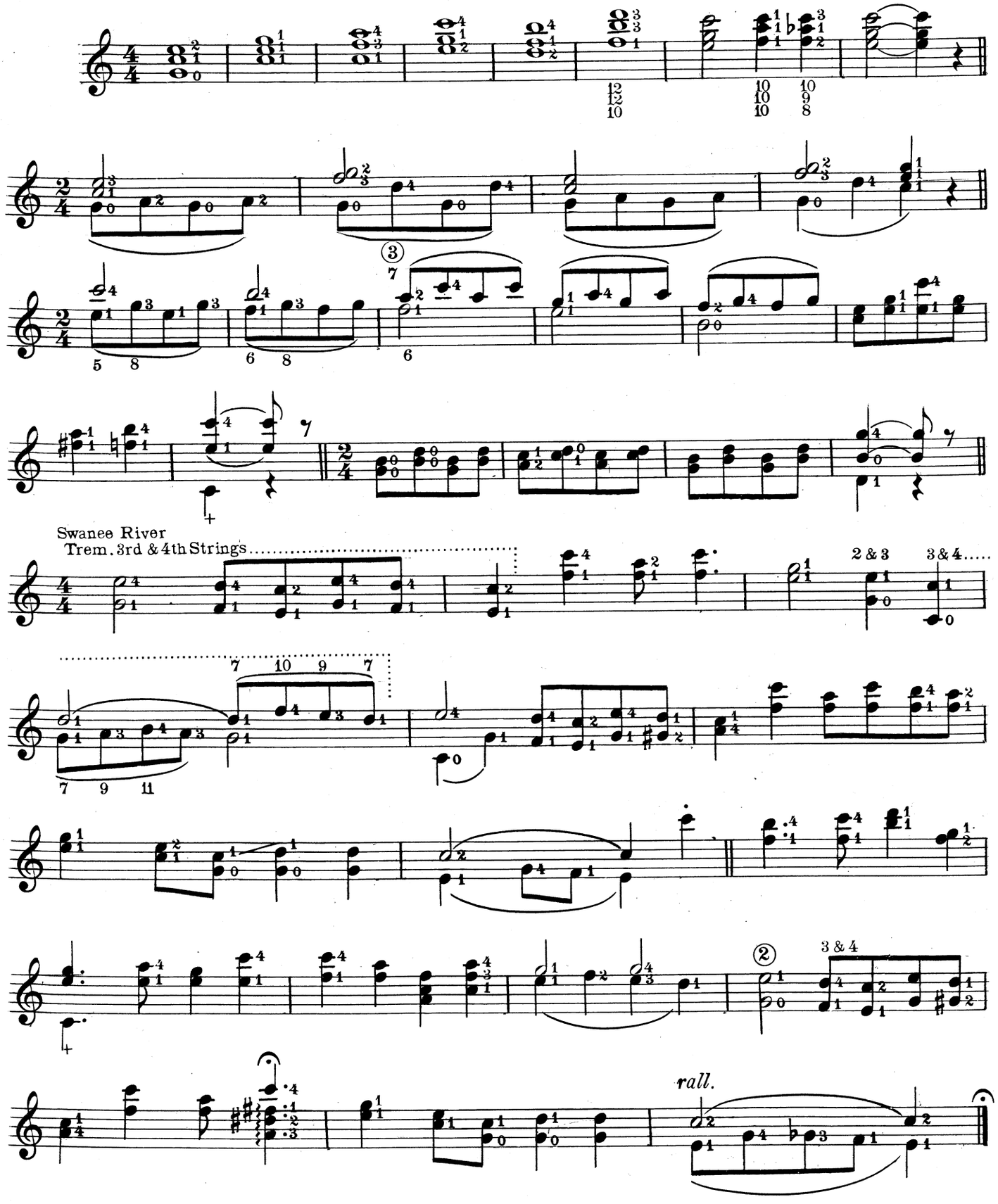


Home Sweet Home

Tremolo all notes with stems up and pick those with stems down, with the thumb-unless slurred underneath.



Two and Three String Tremolo Exercises



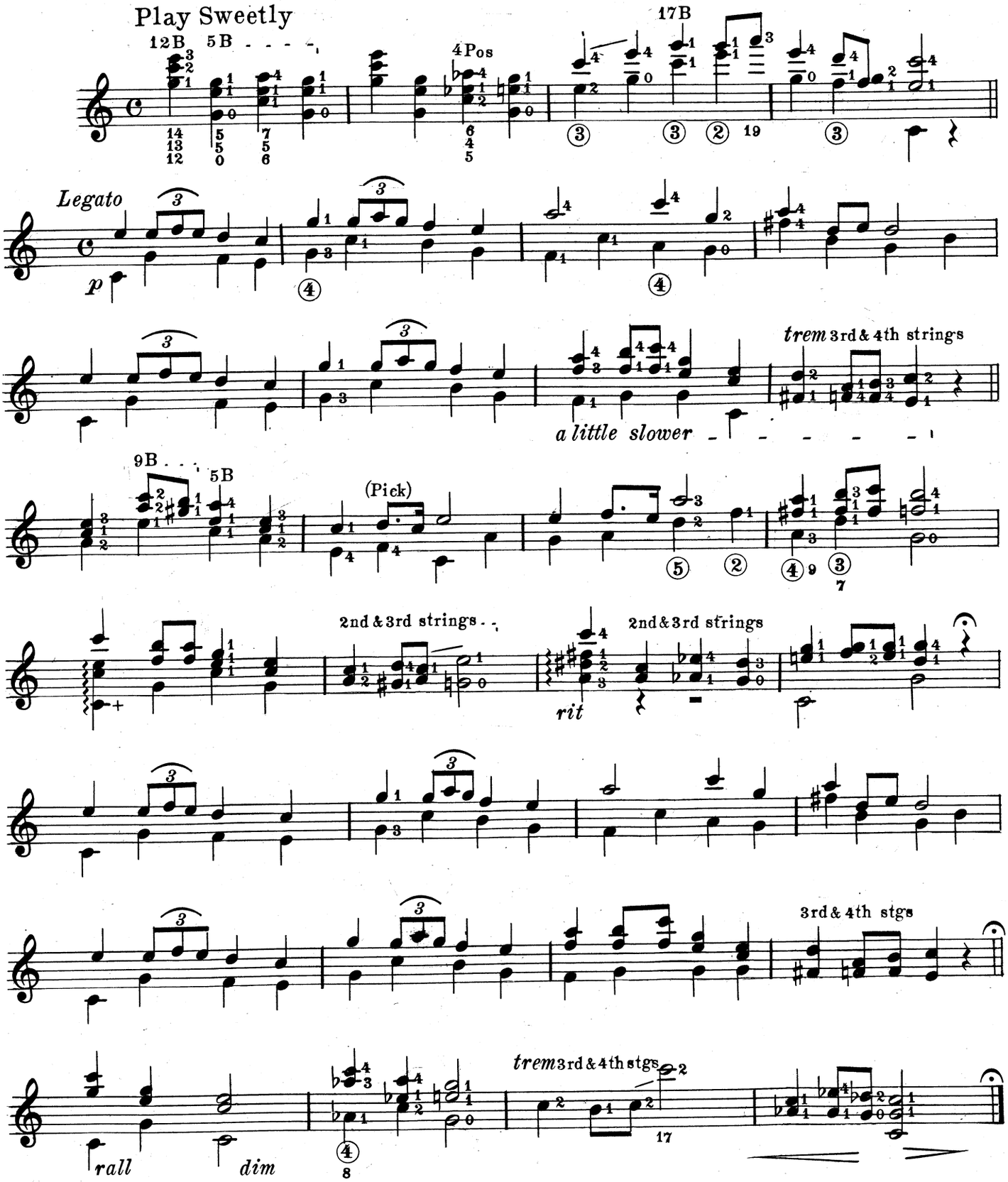
"Sleep, Little One Sleep"

(Slumber Song)

Banjo

BACON

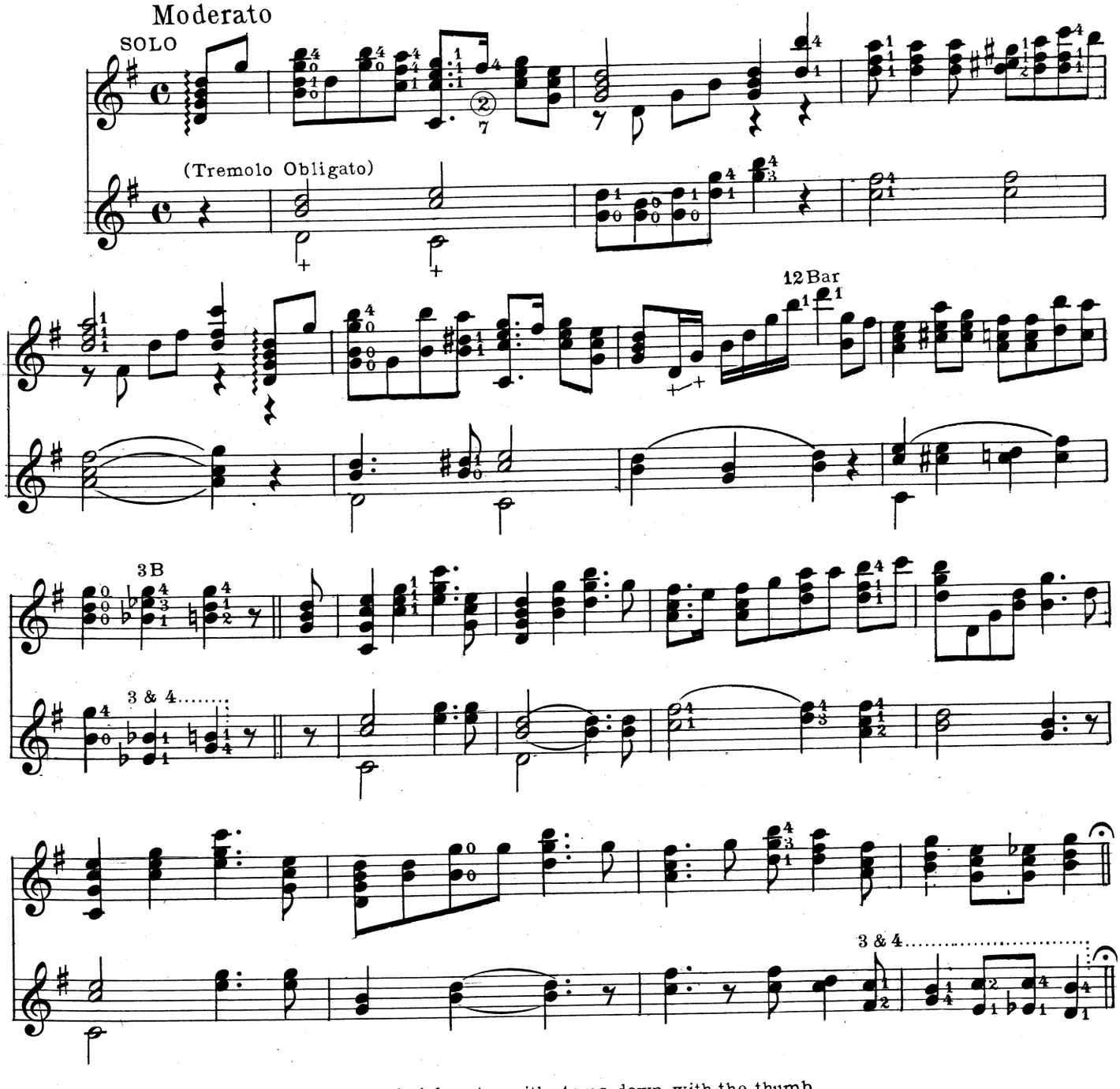
(Tremolo notes with stems up)
First 2 measures should be picked in the usual way



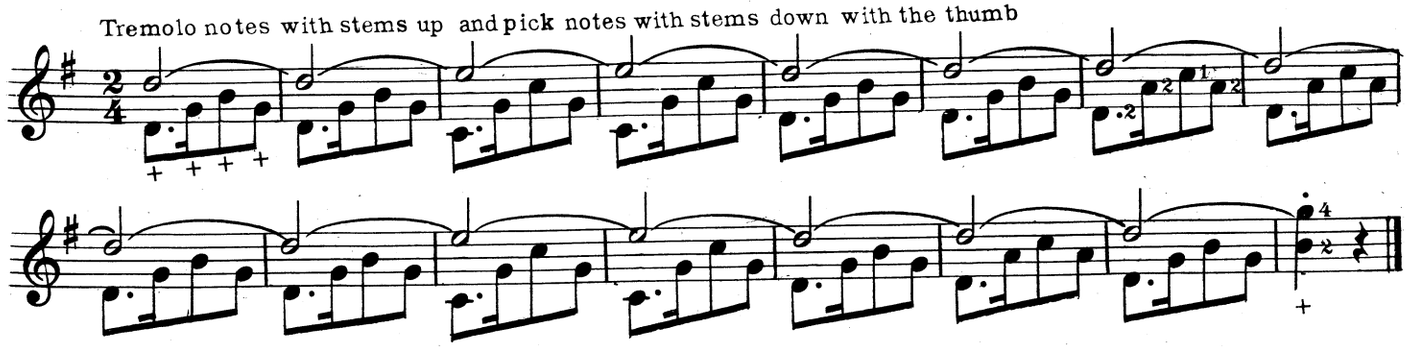
Aloha Oe

(Farewell To Thee)

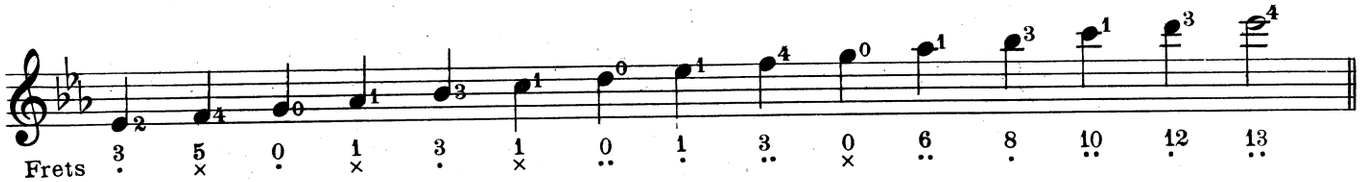
(Duet for 2 Banjos)



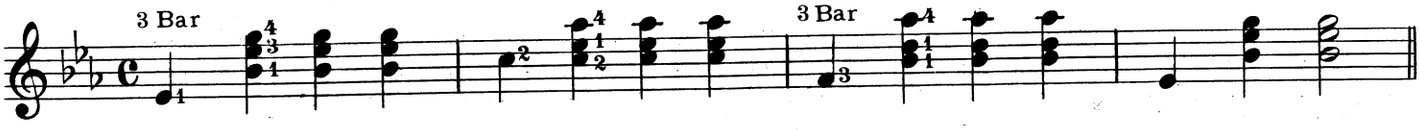
Tremolo notes with stems up and pick notes with stems down with the thumb



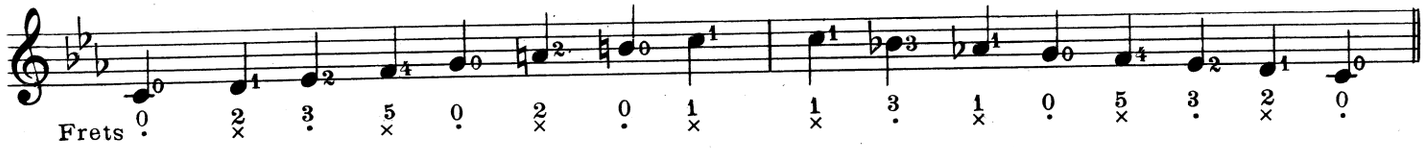
Scale of E flat Major (B. E & A Flat)



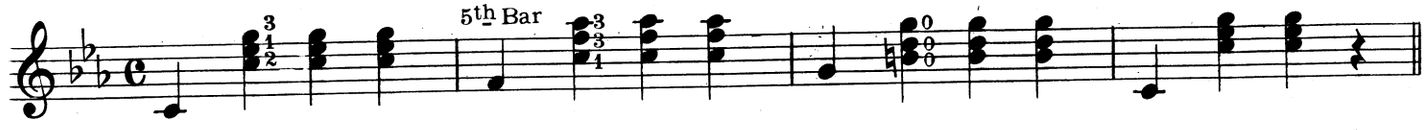
Chords in E flat Major



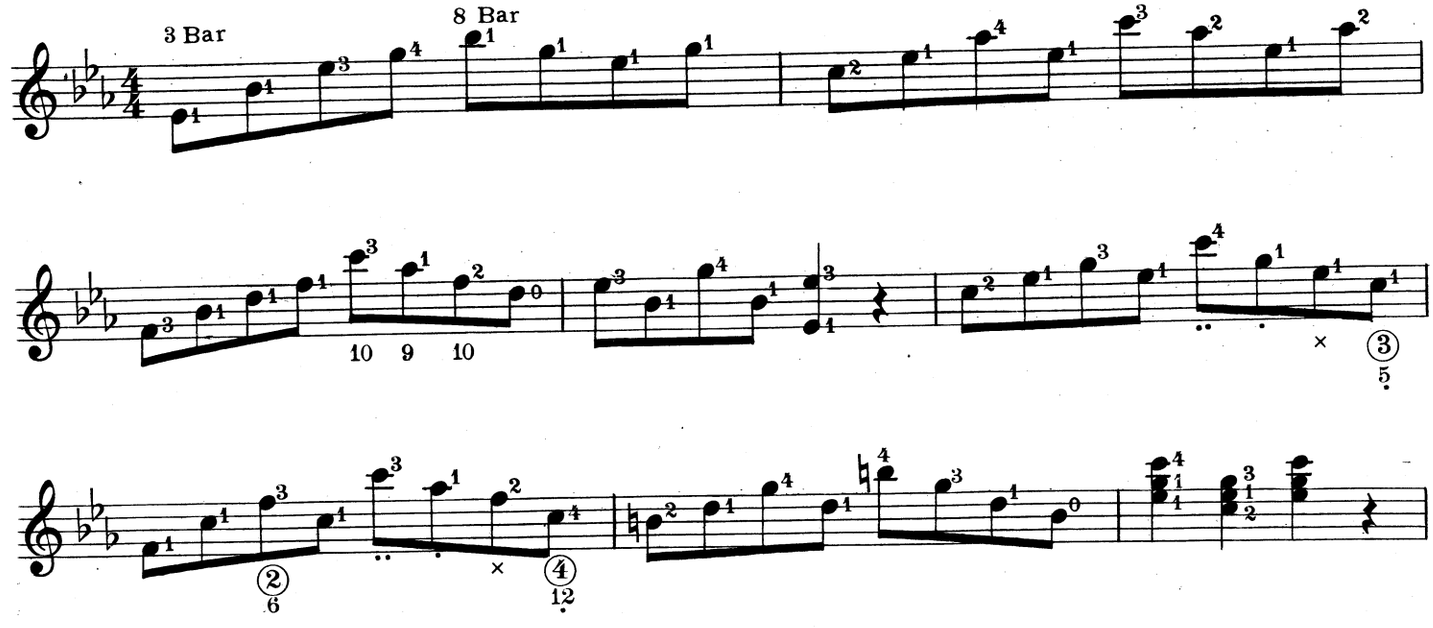
Scale of C Minor relative to E flat Major



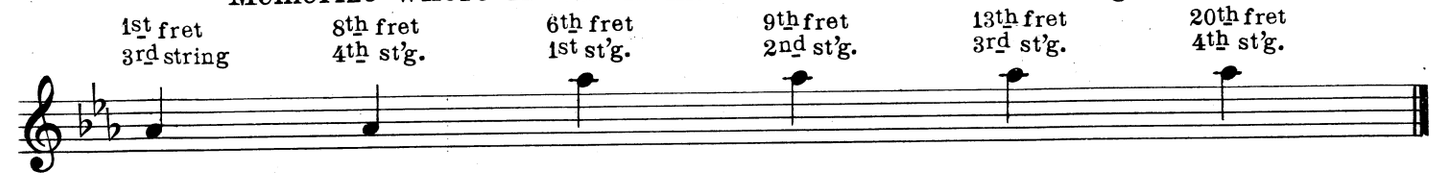
Chords in C Minor



Exercise in E flat Major and C Minor

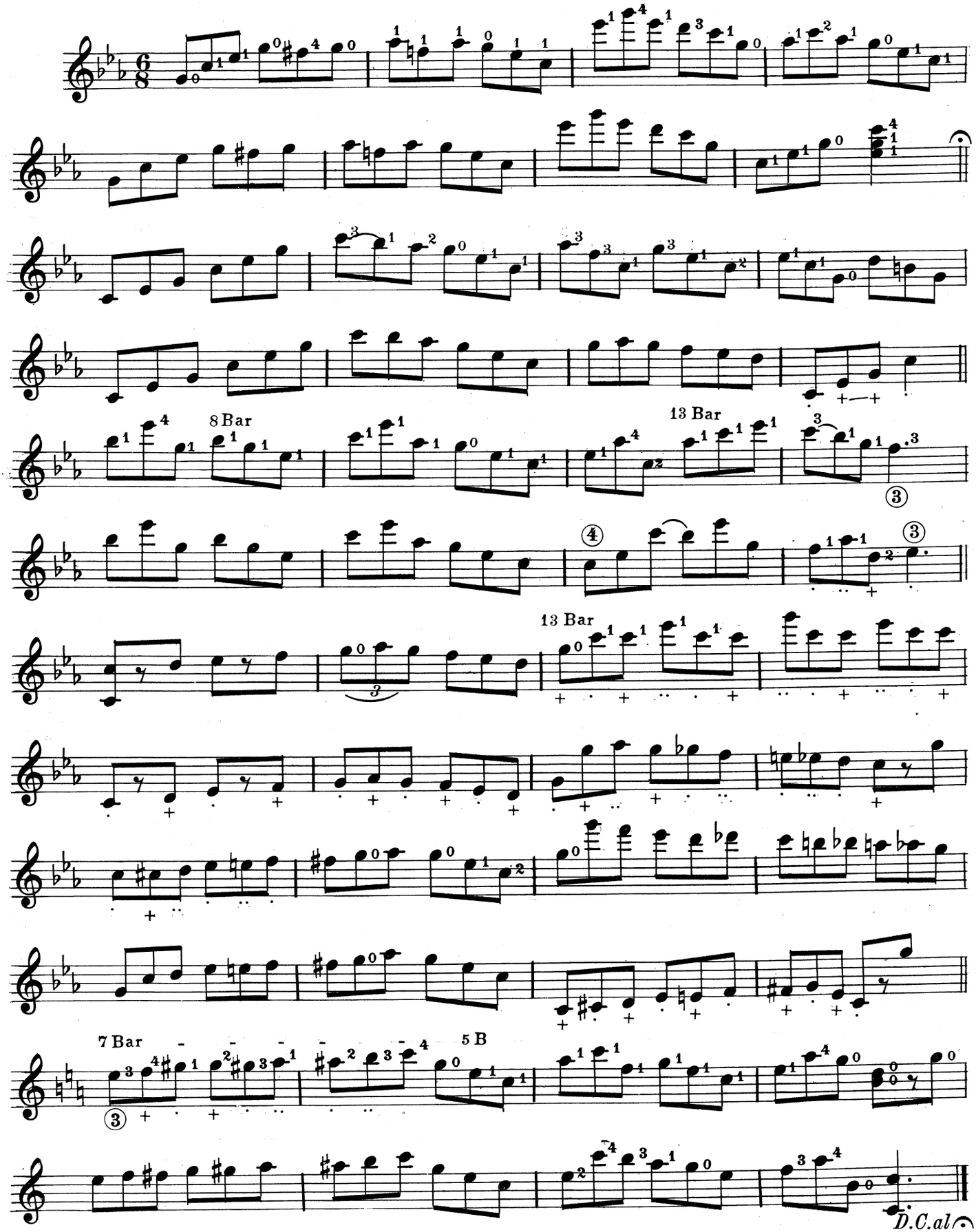


Memorize where A flat is made on the different strings



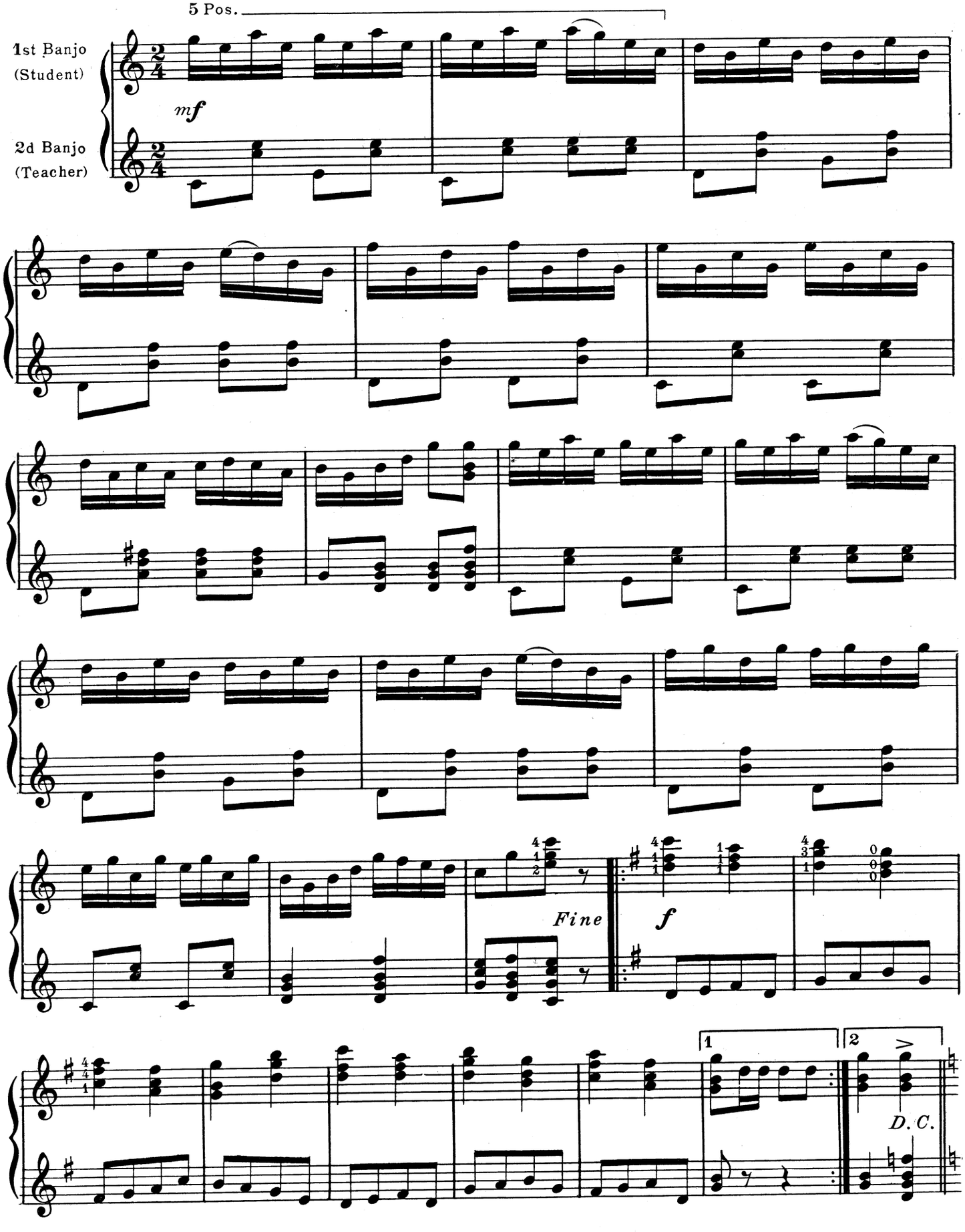
Tarantella

BACON

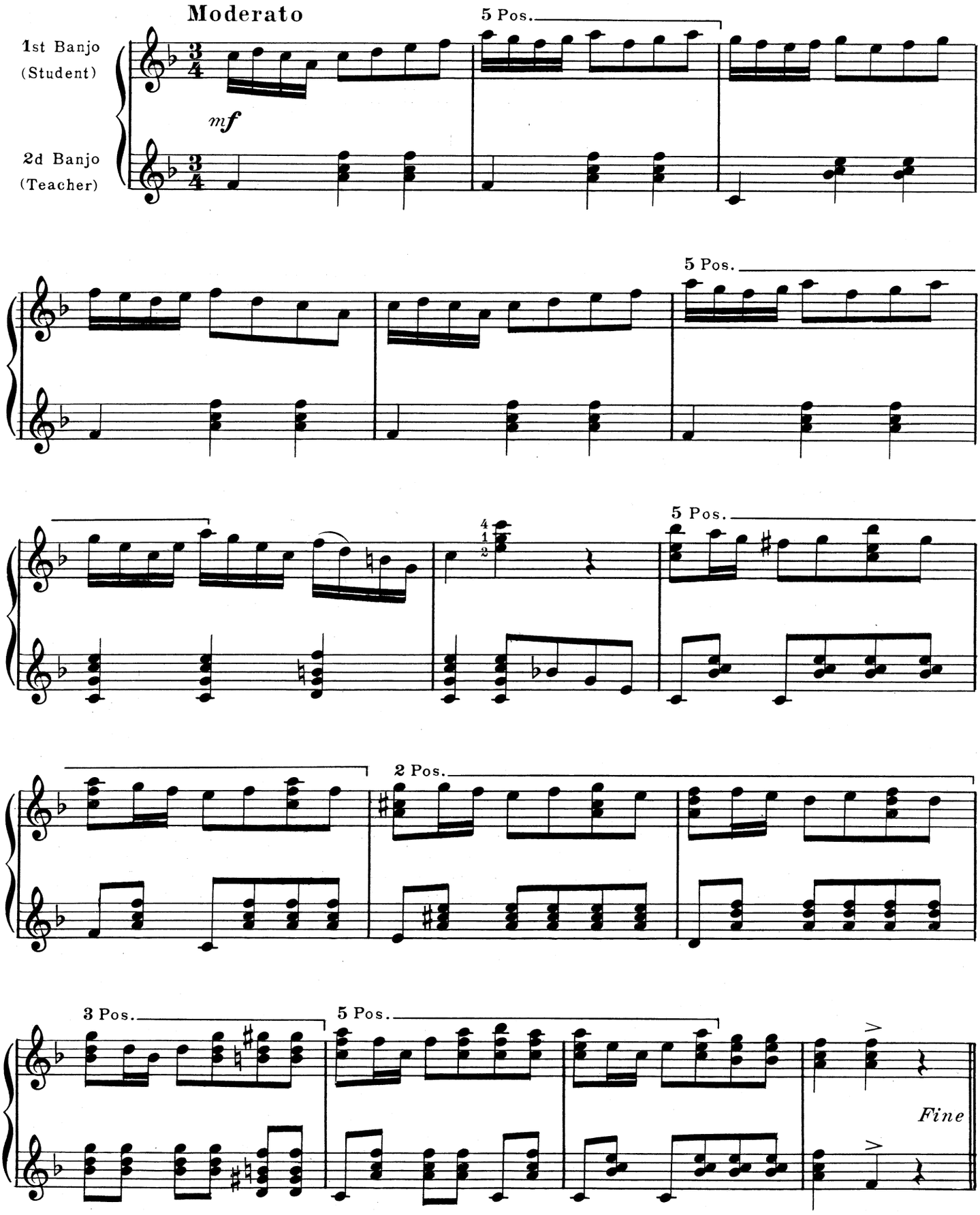


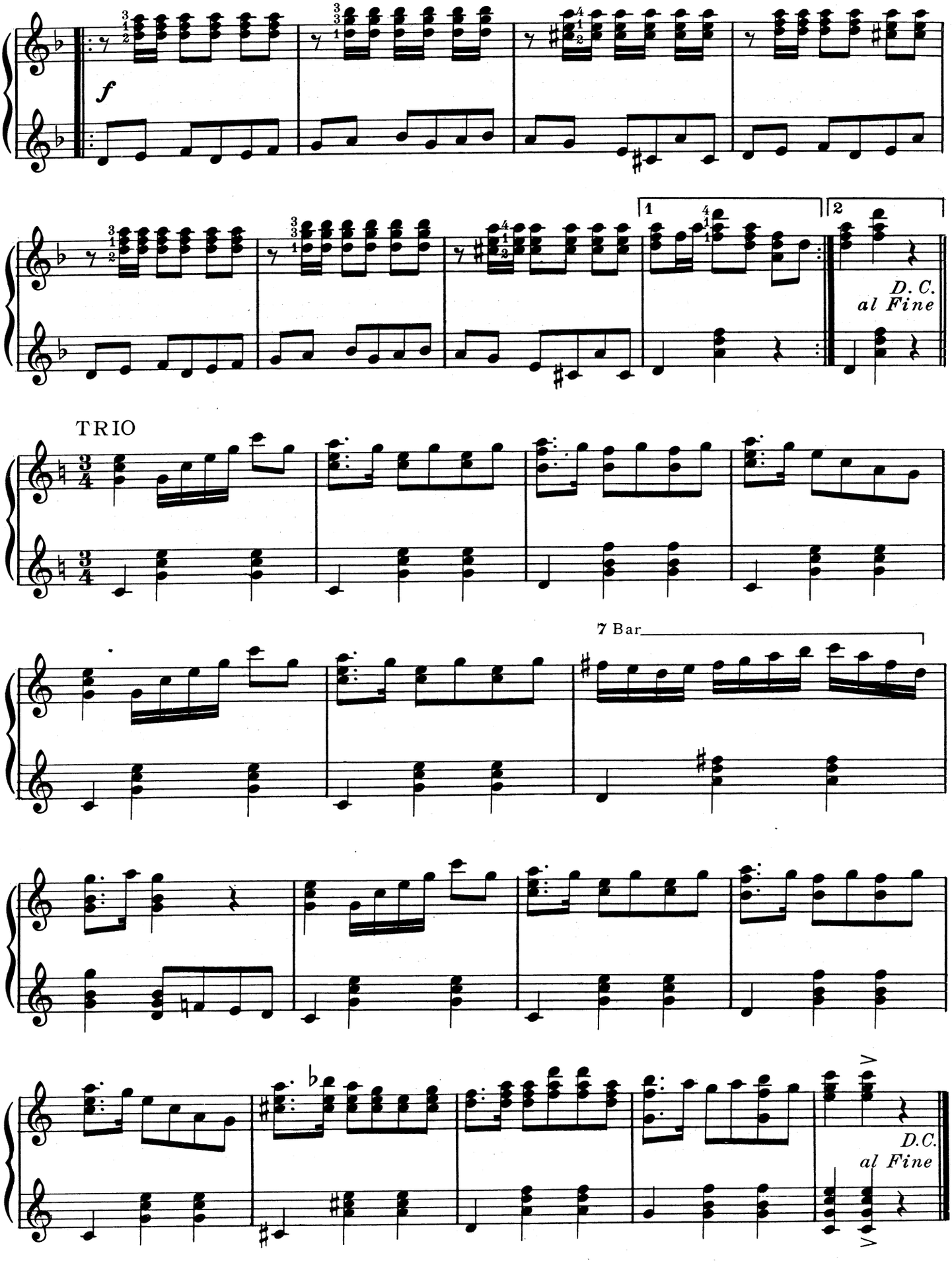
Duet

Allegro

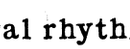
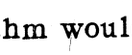
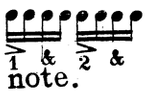
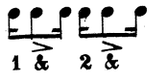


Bolero

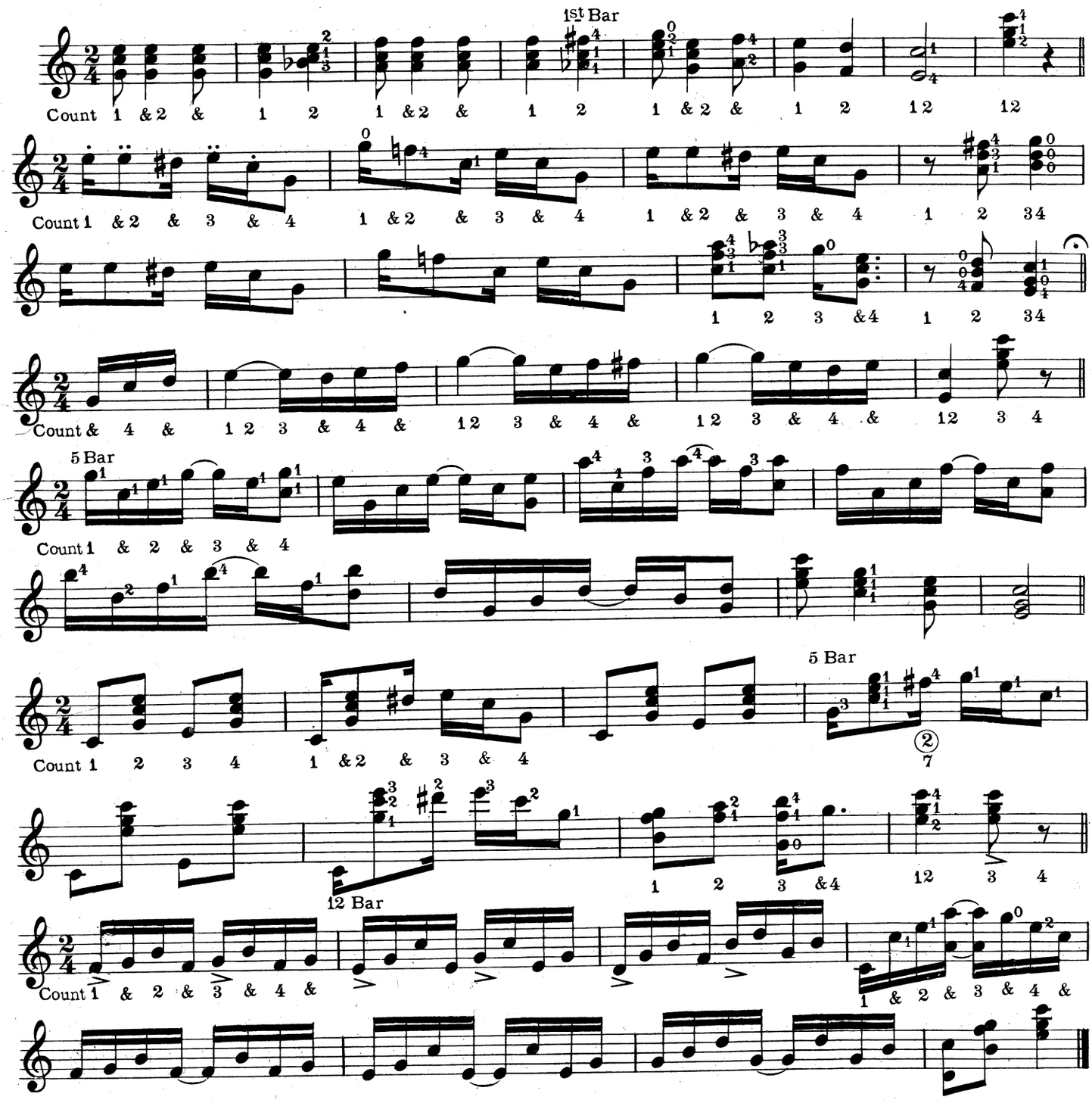

Moderato
5 Pos.
1st Banjo
(Student)
mf
2d Banjo
(Teacher)
5 Pos.
5 Pos.
4
1
2
2 Pos.
3 Pos.
5 Pos.
Fine


f
1
2
D. C.
al Fine
TRIO
7 Bar
D.C.
al Fine

Syncopation

Syncopation is the characteristic rhythm of what is popularly called "Rag-time." It is the alteration of the natural rhythm, in which the accented notes come on the unaccented part of the measure. Thus, in a measure of $\frac{2}{4}$ time the four eighth notes of which it is composed, which in their natural rhythm would be  are written in this way:  so that the accent is displaced and falls on the last half of one beat and the first half of the next, united in one note. In this way also the eight sixteenth notes in $\frac{2}{4}$ time can be arranged to show syncopation. Thus, the  becomes  and the accent falls on what would naturally be an unaccented note.

Exercises in Syncopated time

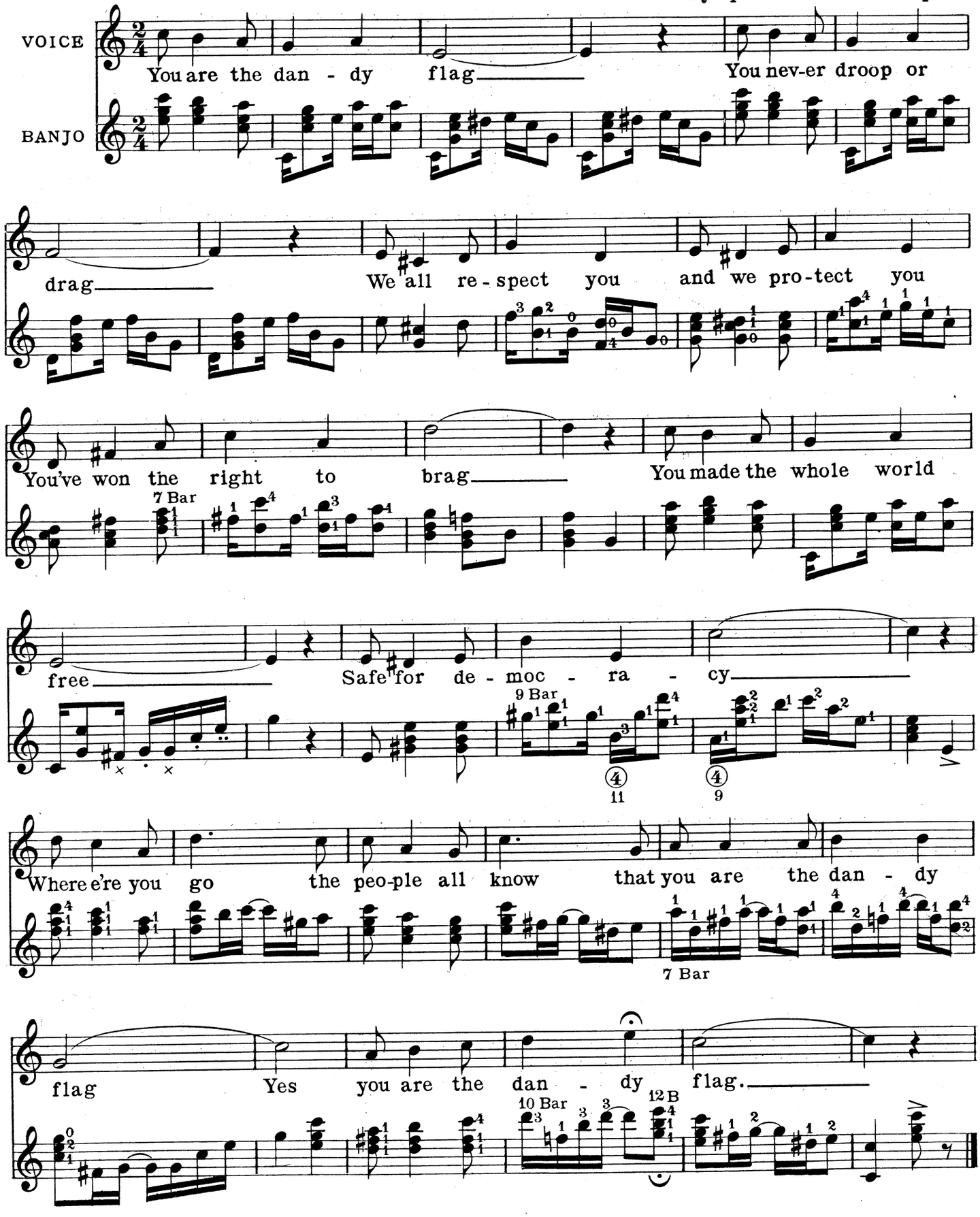


CHORUS FROM

"You Are The Dandy Flag"

Original Key

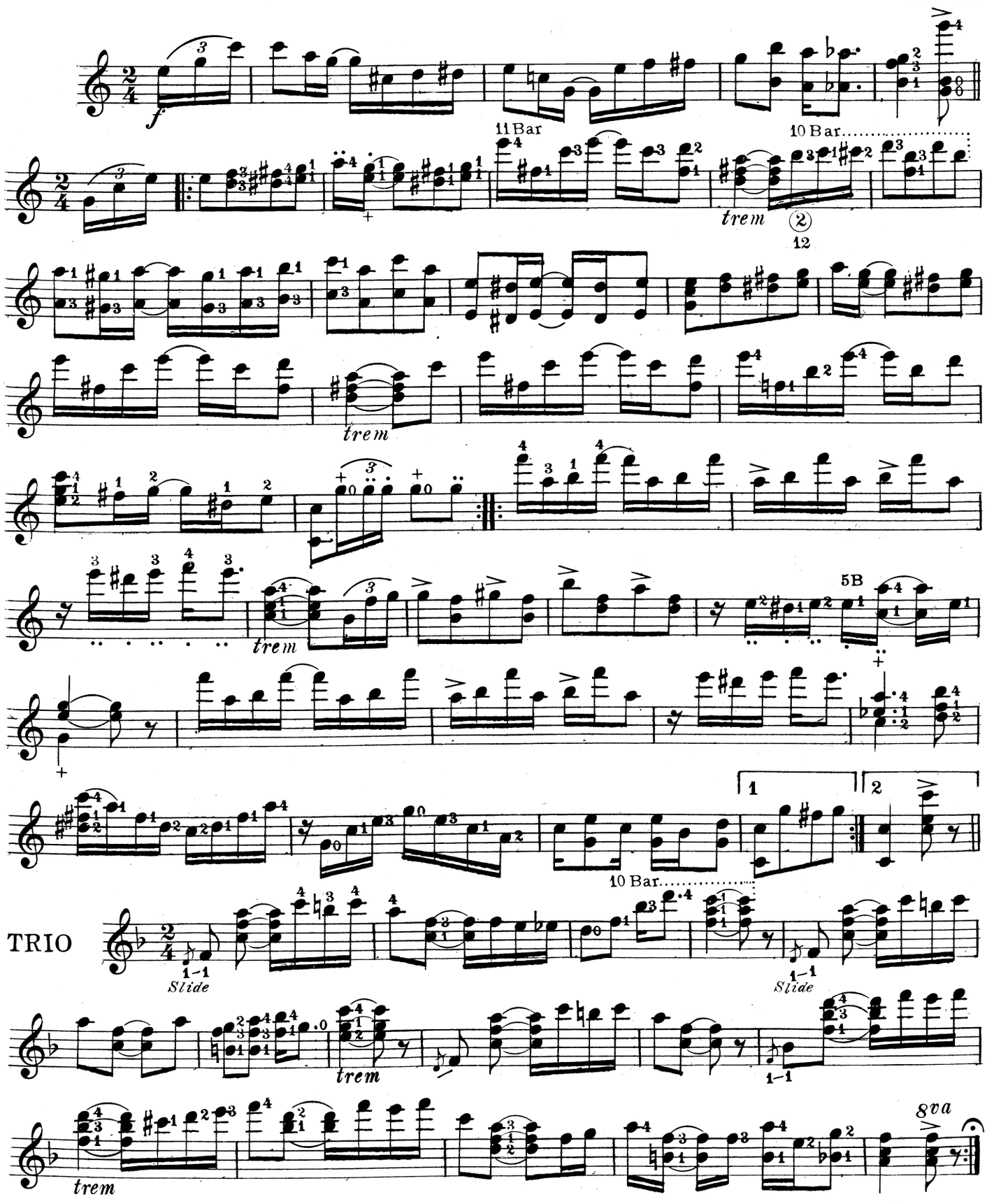
Song by Wm H. PERRY Jr.
By permission of the Composer



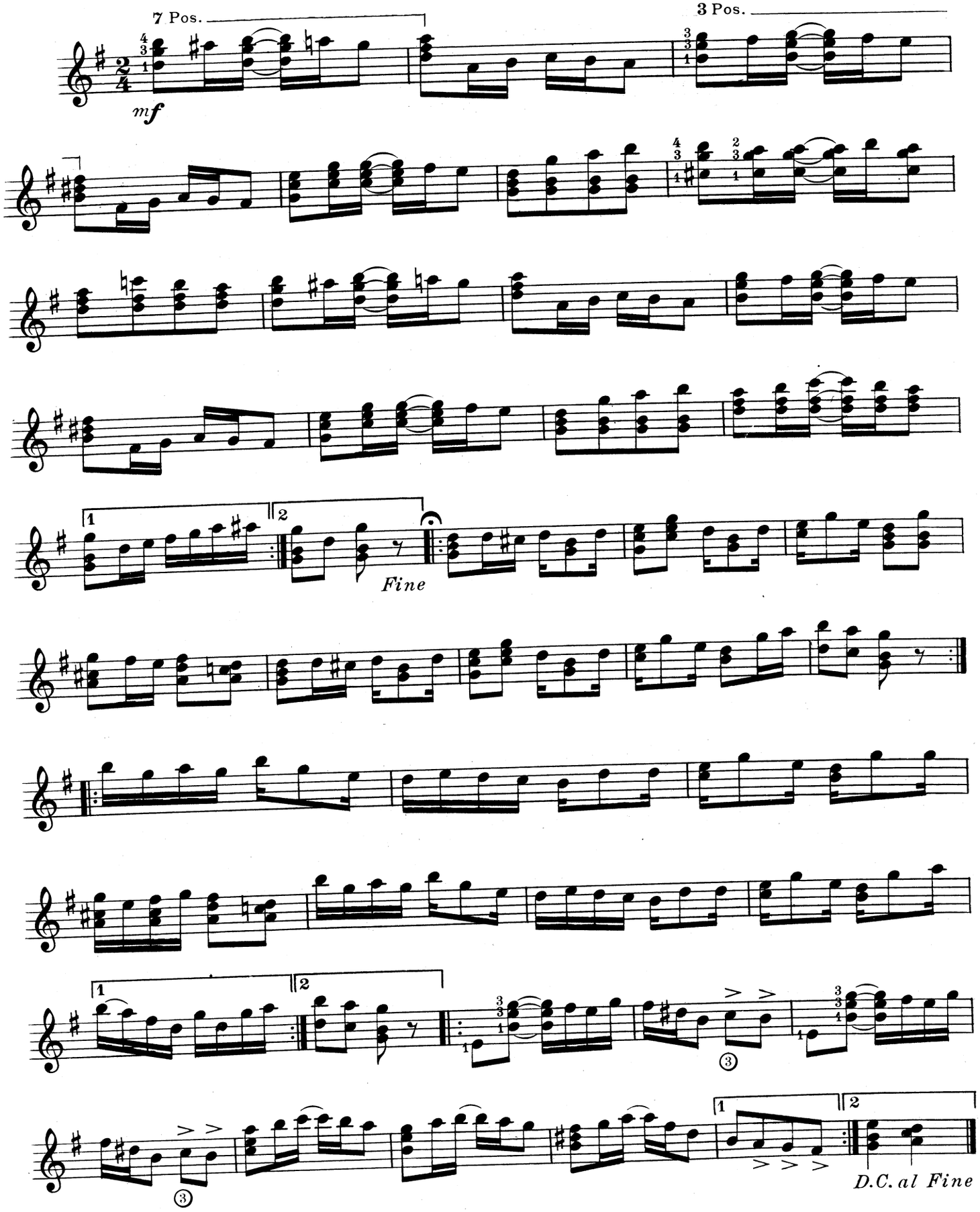
Respectfully Dedicated to Mr. Ted Mills of Winnpeg, Can.

The Winnipeg Rag

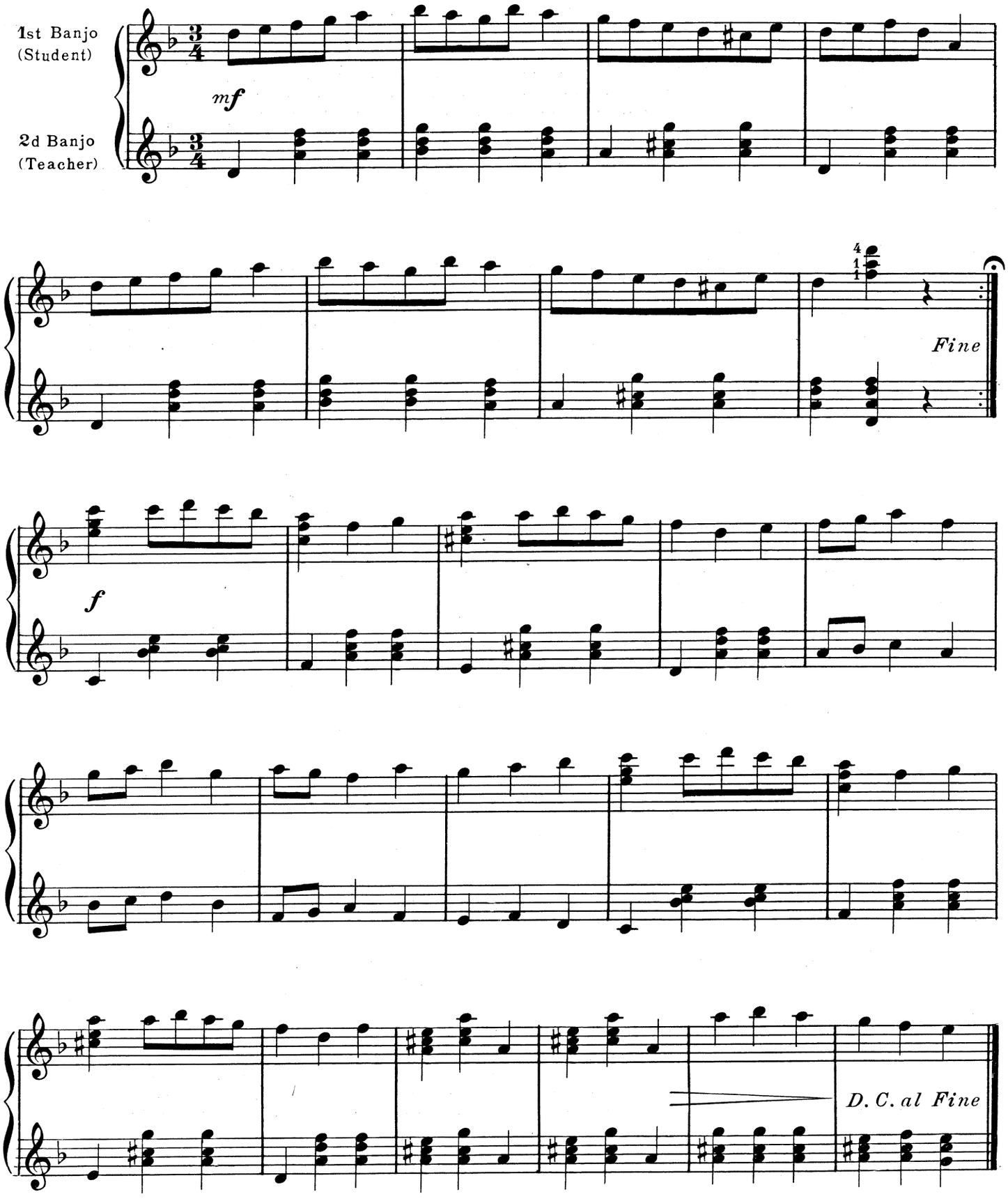
BACON



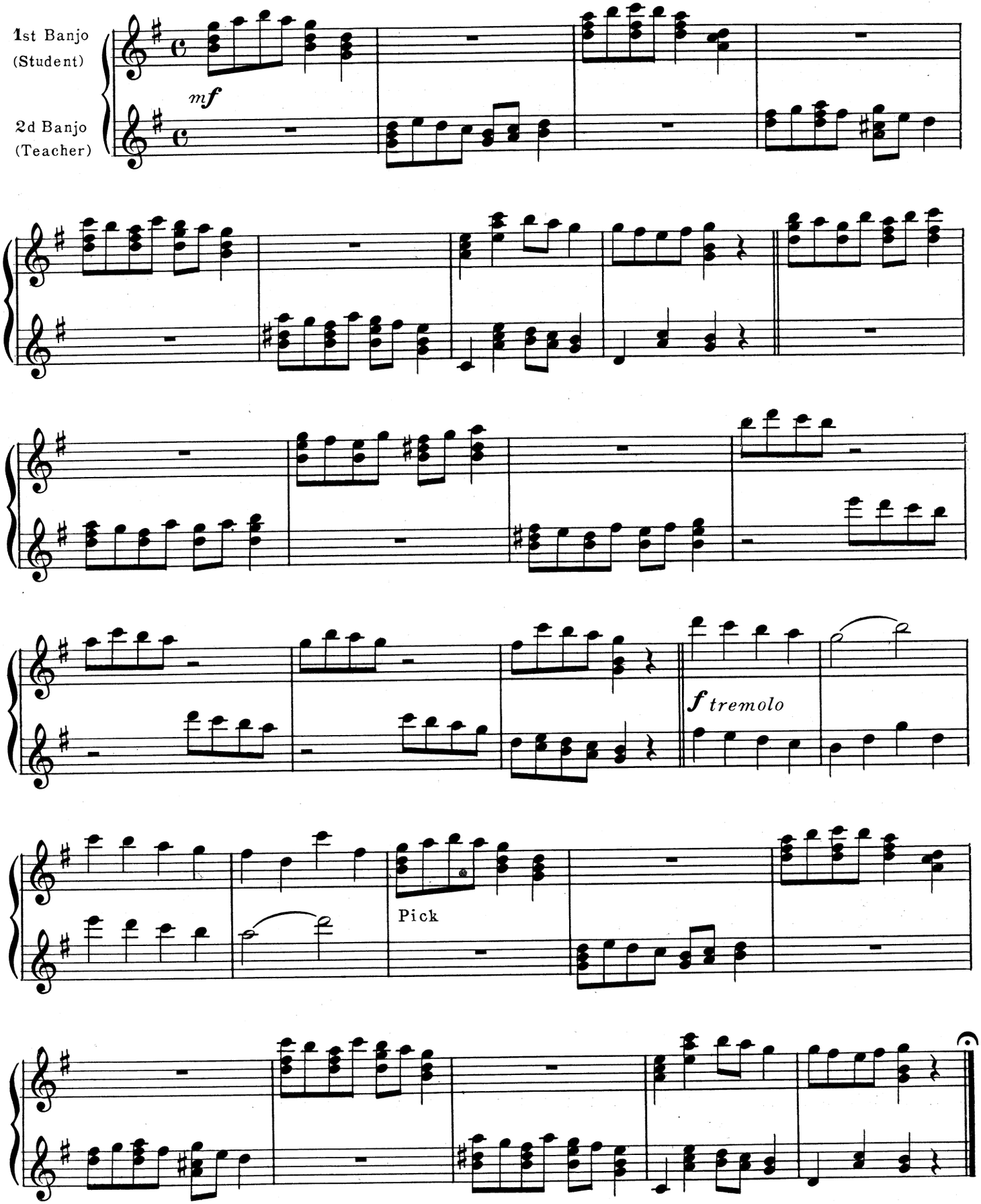
Rag Study



Waltz in D Minor



Duet Exercise

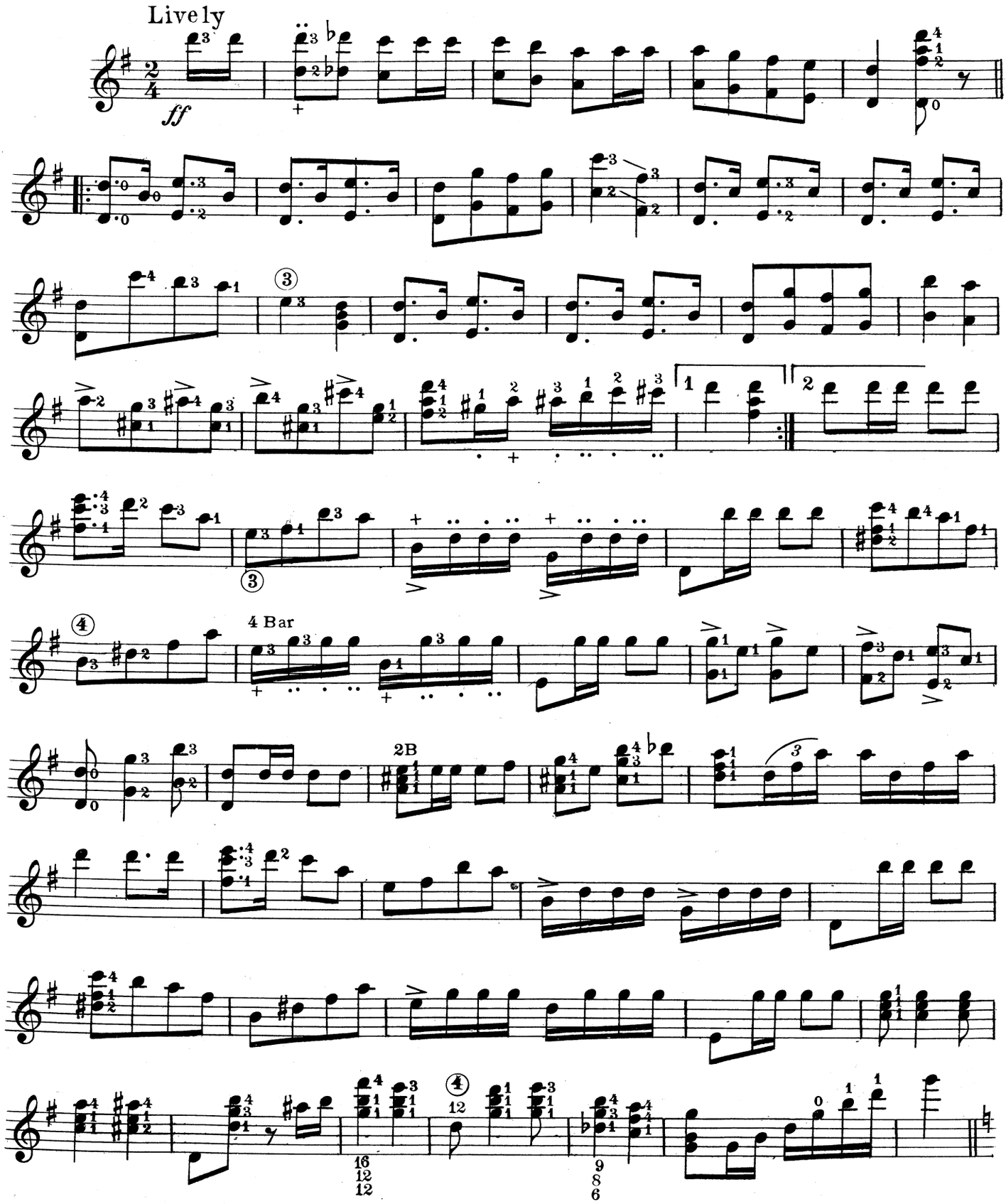


On The Range

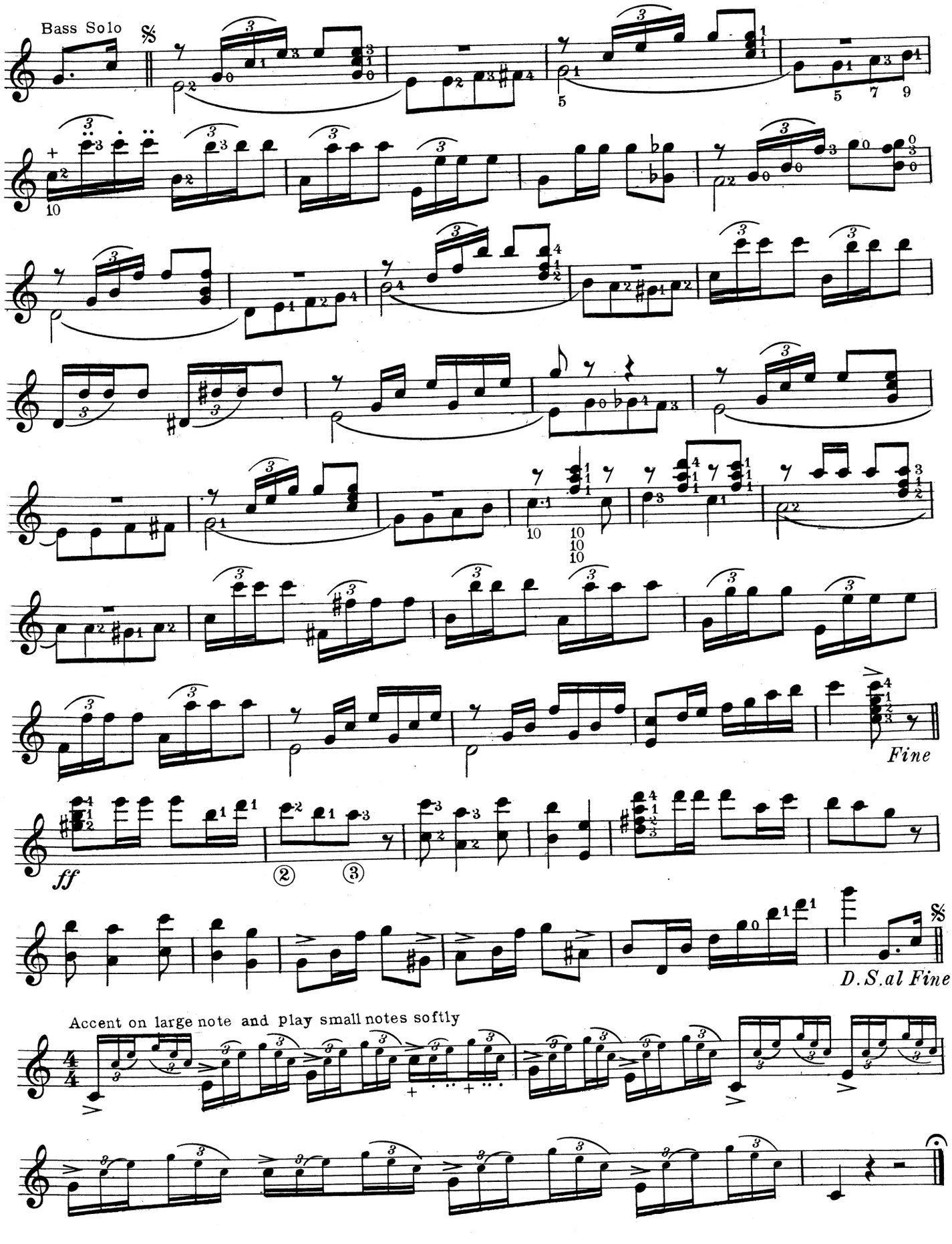
(Galop)

Tune 4th String to D
(One Octave lower then 1st String Open)

BACON

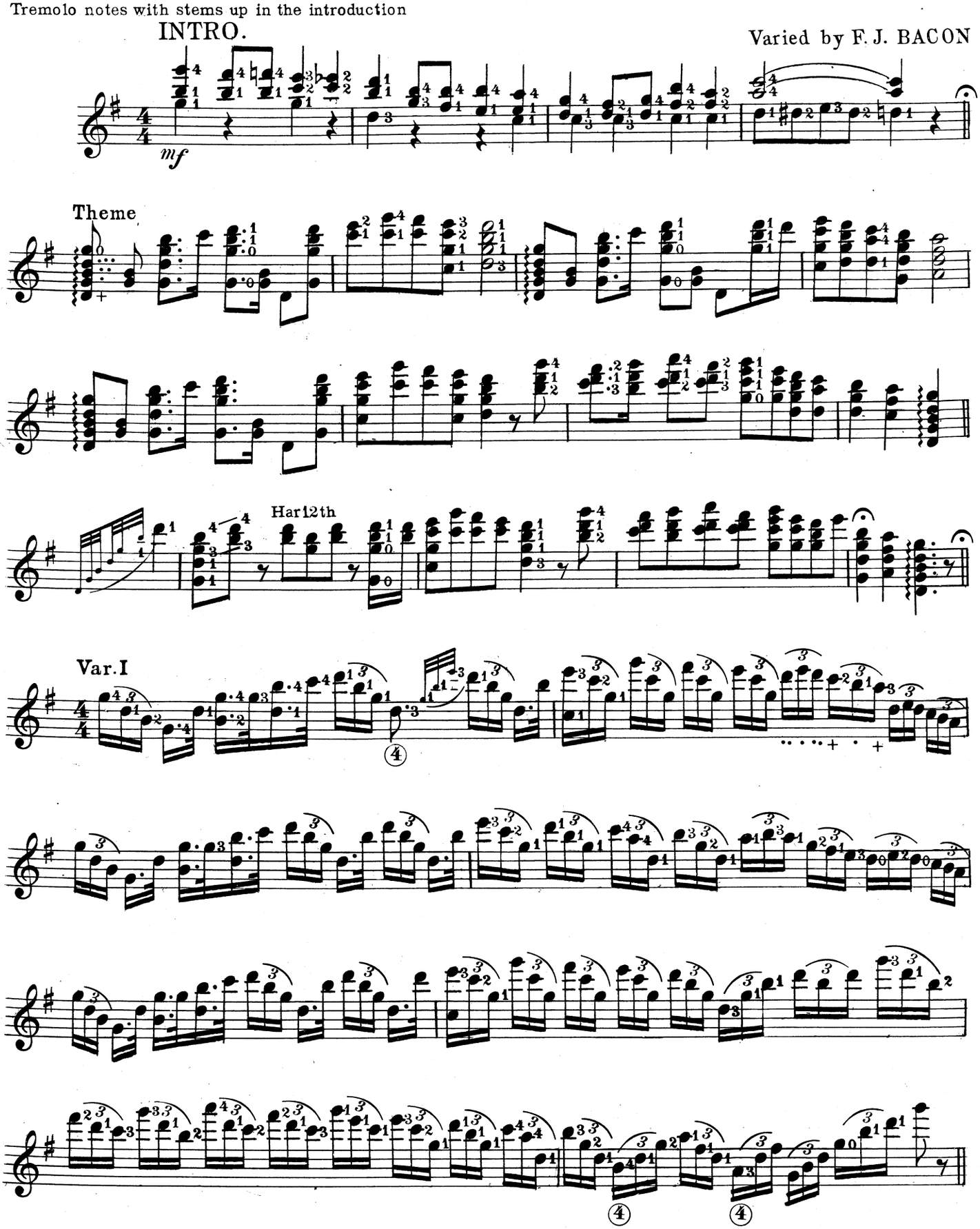


Push down with thumb, to get a good loud round tone on 4th string

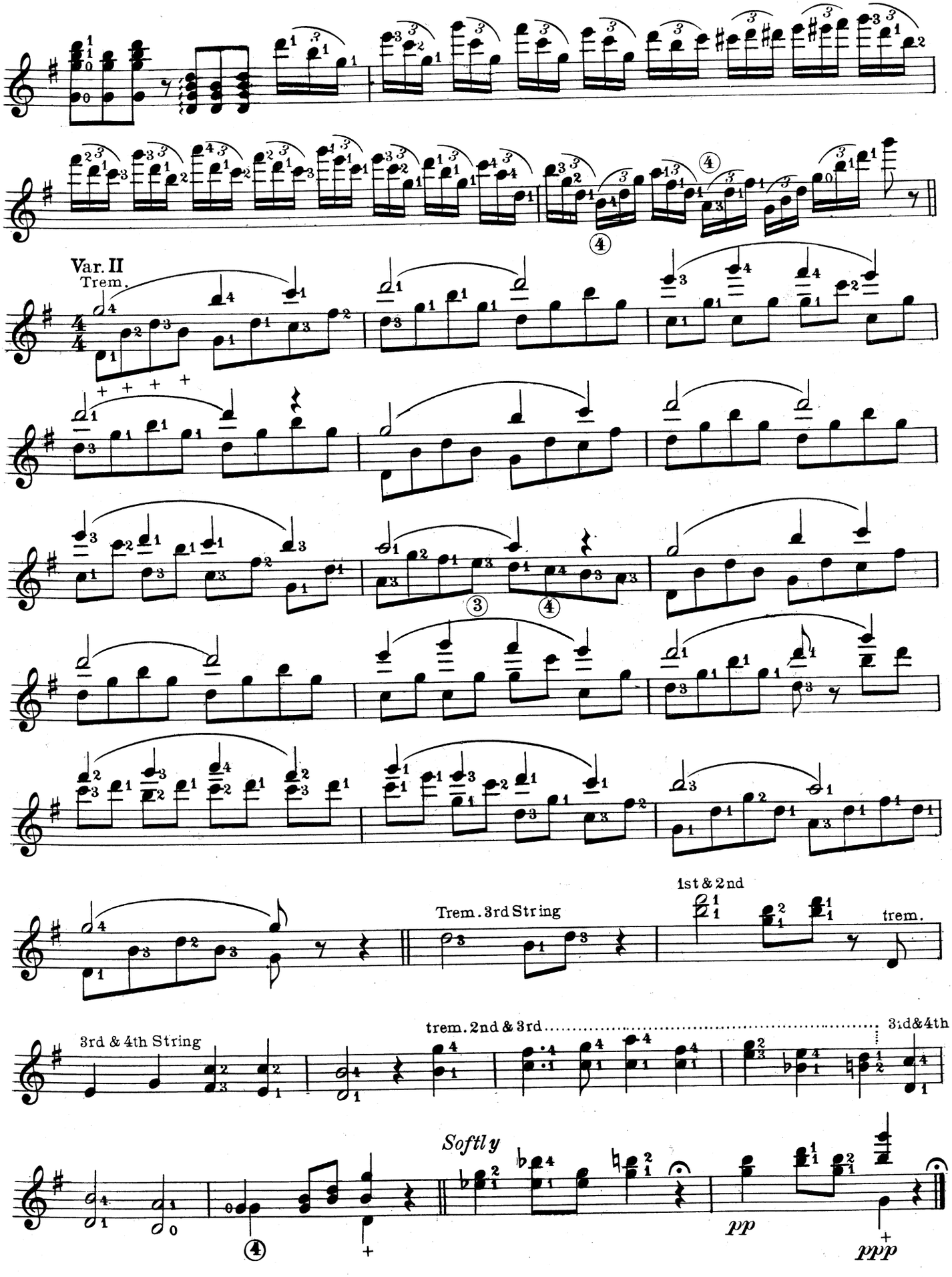

Bass Solo
Fine
ff
D.S.al Fine
Accent on large note and play small notes softly

Old Black Joe

Tremolo notes with stems up in the introduction



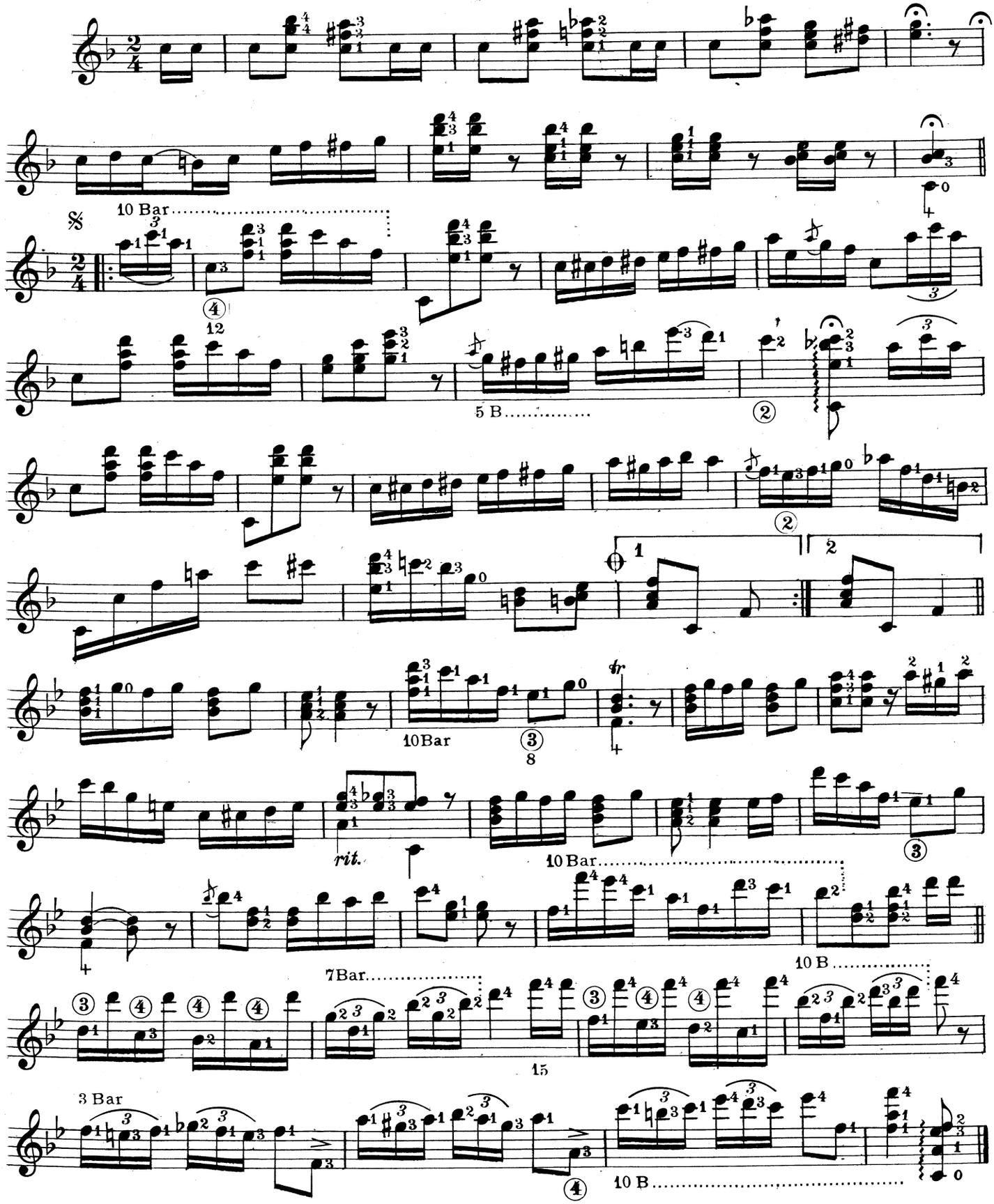
NOTE: The above arrangement is exactly as played by Mr. Bacon for the Edison Talking Machine Co.

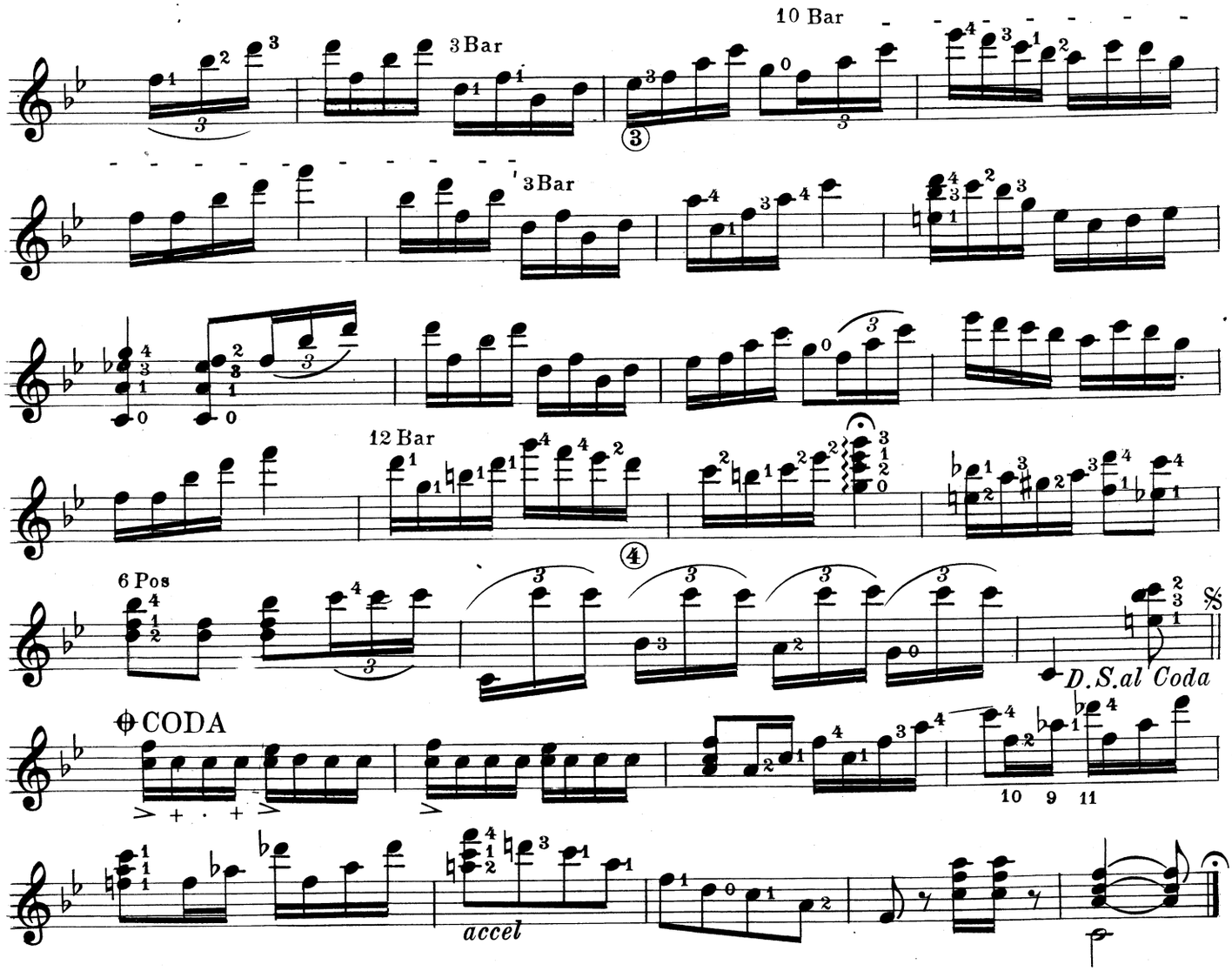

Var. II
Trem.
Trem. 3rd String
1st & 2nd
trem.
3rd & 4th String
trem. 2nd & 3rd
3id&4th
Softly
pp
ppp

The Princess

(Polka di Concert)

BACON

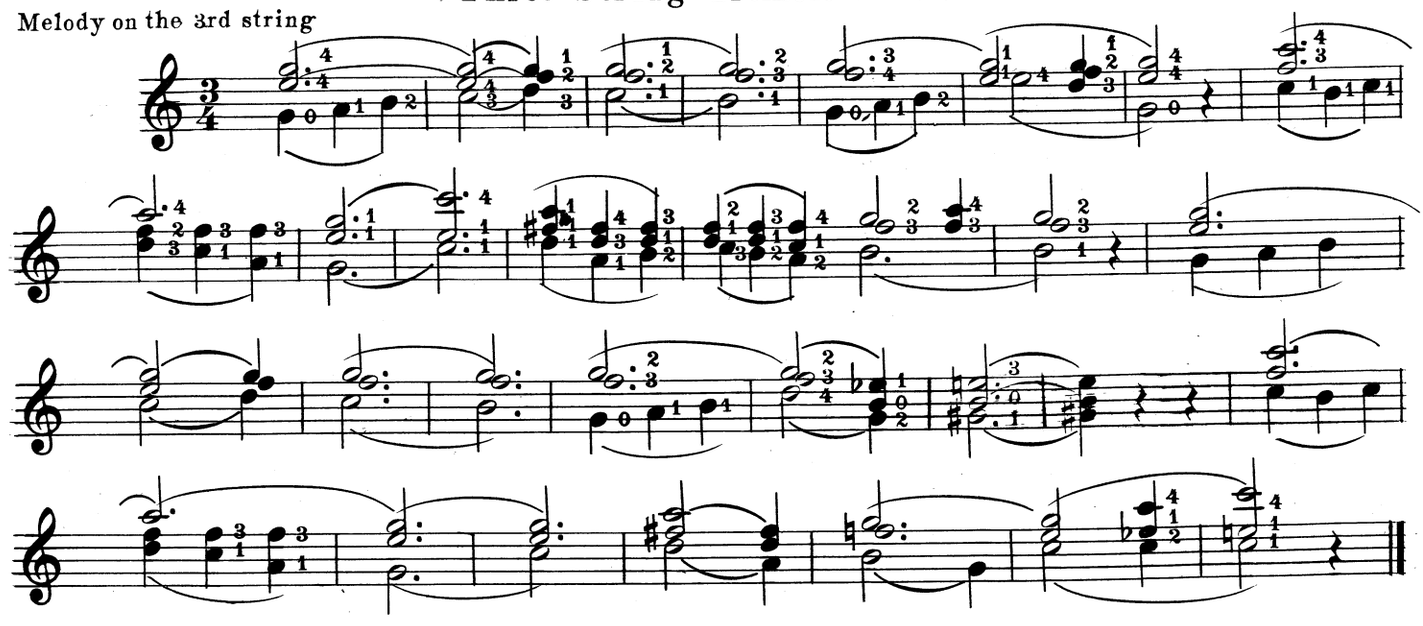




My Colleen

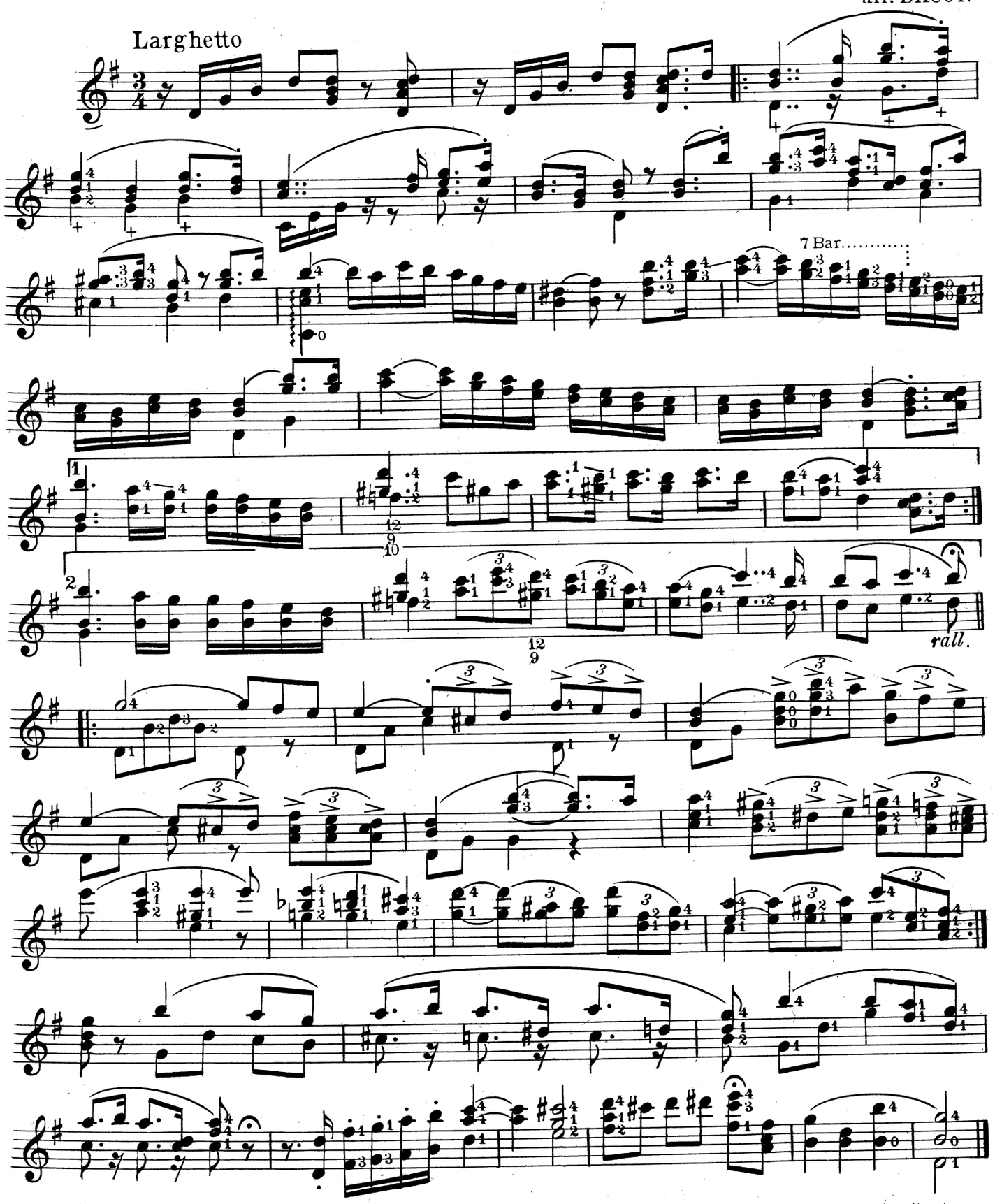
(Three String Tremolo Waltz)

Melody on the 3rd string



Sextet from "Lucia"

arr. BACON



Tremolo notes that are slurred. The dot (·) means to pick the string or strings with fingers. Notes wih stems turned down in measures where upper notes are slurred should be picked with the thumb

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